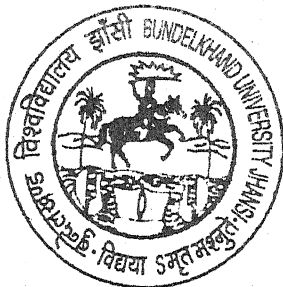
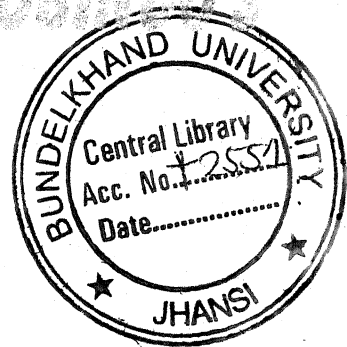


# AN EXPLORATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POETIC PARADIGMS



*A Thesis Submitted to  
the Bundelkhand University, Jhansi  
for  
the Degree of Ph.D.  
in  
English*

**2008**

Supervisor :

*Dr. M.B. Chaturvedi*

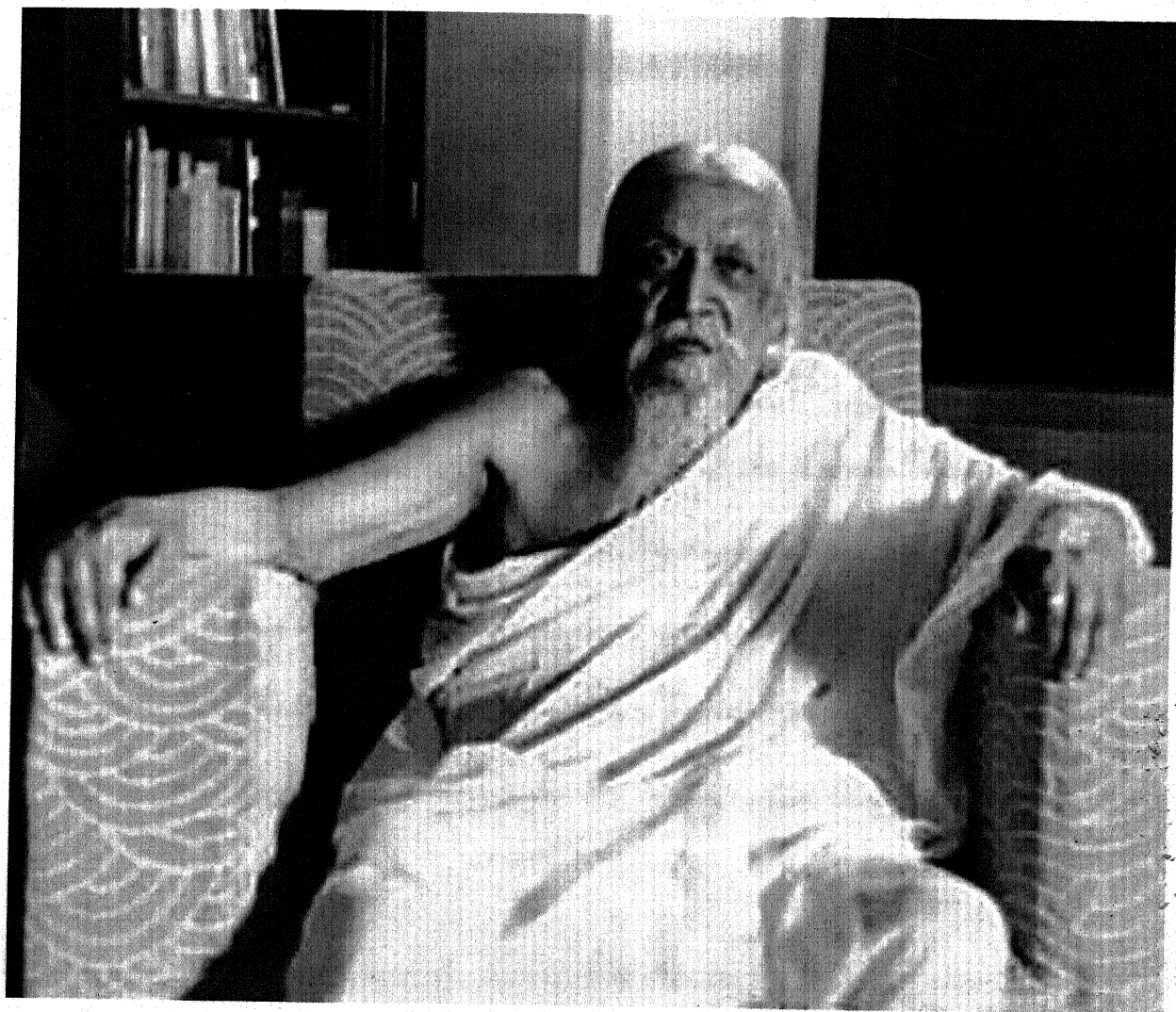
Department of English  
D.V. (P.G.) College, Orai

Investigator :

*Shipra Gupta*

M.A. (English)

**POSTGRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
DAYANAND VEDIC POST GRADUATE COLLEGE, ORAI**

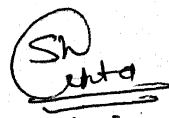


**SRI AUROBINDO**



## DECLARATION

*I solemnly declare that the thesis, entitled "An Exploration of Sri Aurobindo's Poetic Paradigms" submitted by me for the award of Ph.D. Degree in English of the Bundelkhand University, Jhansi (U.P.) is my own work and has not been submitted earlier. However, if anything contrary to this declaration is found later on, I shall be fully responsible for the consequences there of.*

 17/09/08  
(Shipra Gupta)

Dr. M.B. Chaturvedi  
Reader  
Department of English  
D.V. (P.G.) College, Orai

'Suraj Villa'  
Shanti Nagar  
Orai (Jalaun)

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## CERTIFICATE

*This is to certify that Shipra Gupta D/o Sri Shiv Narayan Gupta, who has been working on the topic captioned "An Exploration of Sri Aurobindo's Poetic Paradigms" for her Ph.D. Degree in English of Bundelkhand University, Jhansi under my supervision, has now completed her research work. She has worked under my supervision for the required period (more than two hundred days) as per the ordinance of Bundelkhand University, Jhansi and she has put in the required attendance.*

Supervisor  
*M.B. Chaturvedi*  
17/9/2008  
(Dr. M. B. Chaturvedi)

## PREFACE

Sri Aurobindo, the poet - sage and a man of Himalayan austerity and grandeur, is regarded as the typical product of modern Indian Renaissance. Undoubtedly, Sri Aurobindo is an outstanding figure of Indian English Literature, and his genius as a scholar, writer, philosopher, poet, thinker and visionary unerringly find reflection in his multiple literary creations. His infallible power of expression, acute observation, sharp intellect and Yogic insight put him in the league of poets of great power and versatility. His spiritual sublimity and deep concern for suffering fellow brethren make him the apostle of Vedic Renaissance.

Sri Aurobindo's poetic output reflects his spiritual hankerings and a thirst for regeneration. His early poems bear the impression of his Latin and Greek scholarship, but his later poetry abounds with the elements from *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Upanishads* and breaths the spirit of Indian Culture and Civilization. There is a unique blending of Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism in his poetry. He made use of various symbols to communicate his spiritual experiences, Yogic

consciousness, mystic experiences and wisdom of *Vedas*. His bulk of mystic poetry is extremely rich in symbols through which he tried to convey his sense of the mystery of life.

There have been many attempts to study various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's poetic speculations. In my research work, the entire focus has been given to dig out the hidden ores of Sri Aurobindo's poetic art and make a substantial survey of his poetic paradigms. It also aims at bringing to light Sri Aurobindo's theory of Overhead poetry, a core element of the literary output of Sri Aurobindo. The entire corpus of this thesis has been divided into seven well-balanced chapters.

Presenting a brief survey of Indian English Writings, chapter first *Introduction* of my thesis makes a study of milieu and formative influences that shaped and moulded the many sided genius Sri Aurobindo. It also presents a glimpse of the major poetic works from the distinguished pen of Sri Aurobindo.

The second chapter *His Poetic Theory* is the core chapter my thesis . It makes an analysis of the various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Poetic Theory and his views on the Function of Poetry. Sri Aurobindo achieves a unique distinction when he presents human life as a motivating force behind all human quests, both materialistic and spiritual.

The next core chapter that forms the fundamental ideology of Sri Aurobindo's poetry is *Philosophical Revelations*. The chapter presents the articulation of truth as his poetic mission. It also reveals his philosophical interpretation of art and beauty and Yogic consciousness as the corner stone of spiritual ascendance and aesthetic speculations.

The fourth chapter of my research work *Use of Myths and Symbols* in mystic speculations of Sri Aurobindo offers to analyse the application of the myths and symbols to his poetic compositions. Mysticism and suggestiveness are the hall-mark of Sri Aurobindo's poetry which is replete from *Veda*, *Gita* and *Upanishads*.

The next chapter *His Overhead Poetry* puts forward man's evolution from obscure physical mentality to profound spiritual illumination. It also intends to explore manifestation of the supramental vision of Nature and life and man. Sri Aurobindo's poetry presents spiritual evolution as the leitmotif of all physical existence.

Chapter VI *His Poetic Craft* reveals the methodology Sri Aurobindo employs for the purpose of making his poetry of spiritual evolution more forceful, more explicit, and more effective. Sri Aurobindo, as a poet and as a seer, adopts a specific



mode of using artistic attributes such as poetic language, pattern, imagery and metaphors which mark a substantial deviation from ordinary use.

I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. M. B. Chaturvedi of D. V. College, Orai (U.P.) whose guidance and supervision enabled me to complete my reserch work on the subject. His scholarly studies and suggestions on this topic have been a perennial source of inspiration and help to me.

I also place on record my sense of thankfulness to Dr. (Mrs) Alka Rani Purwar, Head of the English Department D.V. College, Orai for her constant encouragement to me to complete the thesis in time.

I must also register my gratitude to my principal Dr. N. D. Samadhiya who showered his paternal love and affection on me and provided all the facilities at his command to complete my work successully.

It would have been well neigh impossible for me to complete my research work without the affectionate blessings and encouragement of my respected grandfather (Shri Moolchandra Gupta) and my dear parents (Shri Shiv Narayan Gupta and Smt. Sulbha Gupta) who have helped me in a numerous ways and

always inspired me to transform their dream of a thesis by me into a reality.

I heartily thank to my brothers, friends and my near and dear ones including Mr. Pankaj Gupta (Poorvi Computers , Orai) whose constant help and affectionate inspiration has been a beacon light to me.

Finally, I bow my head before the Supreme power of God who always enlightened my path to complete my research work successfully. May God always be with me.

Date :...17/09/08

  
(Shipra Gupta)

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# CHAPTER-I

## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

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There is no denying the fact that the rich tradition of Indian English Literature came into being as an interesting by-product of an eventful interaction between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and disturbed India. Infact, this phenomenon is the result of a close encounter between two diverse traditions, as F.W. Bain puts it, "India a withered trunk ... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage." When Britishers came to reign in India, colonial education provided a kind of free thinking to Indians. Indian English is not only by-product of the Britisher's legacy but also it began by the regional linguistic co-operation too. From the purpose of present thesis the entire Indian English Literature can be divided into two parts: the literature written before independence and the literature written after independence. Pre-independence literature followed the norms of British writings. They followed the descriptive method not only in their fiction but also in their poetry. According to K.R.S. Iyengar :

The growth of Indian English literature is a "native eruption". It becomes a creative process which is no less than the creative process of other writers in the world. He also suggests the communicability of

the expressiveness with the specific exploration of the linguistic competence of the Indian writers in an Indian way.<sup>1</sup>

Indian English Literature has got its multifarious development; it has been named many times as Anglo-Indian, Indo-English and finally Indian English Literature. George Sampson reviews the literary works written in English as 'Anglo-Indian'.<sup>2</sup> K.R.S. Iyengar, the pioneer critic of the Indian Writing in English, prefers to call it 'Indo-Anglian'.<sup>3</sup> While P.C. Kotoky calls it 'Indo-English'.<sup>4</sup> It has been growing gradually since the beginning of the nineteenth century to the poetry of Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal and Pritish Nandy etc., but "our critical performance in the interpretation and evaluation of Indo-Anglian Literature is still largely an accomplished task."<sup>5</sup>

Since the topic of my Ph.D. thesis includes the genre poetry, it would be the sincere effort to analyse and to present the <sup>its</sup> poetic growth. This thesis is to analyse not entirely the growth of poetry but the growth of poetry is to be explored upto the writings of Sri Aurobindo. However, the mode and the expressibility of Indian English Poetry can easily be divided into three parts: (1) Imitative (2) Assimilative and (3) Experimentative. The third one is the post modern poetry which includes the works of the poets after 1960. Therefore, it becomes feasible to concentrate on the first two parts. First stage deals with the works of Henry Louis

Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Second stage includes the works of Toru Dutt, Ramesh Chunder Dutt, Man Mohan Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose and the third stage includes the works of Kamla Das, A.K. Ramanujam, Nissim Ezekiel, Mamta Kalia, Shiv K. Kumar, P. Lal, Jayanta Mahapatra and many others. But the purpose of the thesis is to reveal the poetic bulk composed by Sri Aurobindo. It seems now appropriate to come straight way to the poetic works of Sri Aurobindo. Since the second phase of poetic development shows the process of assimilative, it becomes natural to understand the process of assimilation itself before bringing into being the poetic attributes of Sri Aurobindo.

The process of assimilation denotes the digestion of imitative norms and to work out the Indian culture with proper stress on its culture, and this becomes the assimilative phase in the development of Indian English Poetry.

Sri Aurobindo strengthens on the threshold of assimilative and experimentative poetry because the *Collected Poems* of Sri Aurobindo reveals the physical aspects of life too. On the other hand in *Savitri* he reveals the spiritual aspects.

Sri Aurobindo's poetry stands a class apart in Indo-English Poetry. Sri Aurobindo as a poet stands with unique position, for he narrates that kind of thematic contents in his poetry which can eliminate the depressed one and can bring one

out of the depression towards the illumination of life and soul. K.R.S. Iyengar realises that a new kind of poetry like Sri Aurobindo "demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer."<sup>6</sup>

Born in 1872, Sri Aurobindo was the third child of Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi. From his childhood, he inherited an environment of nationalism with his grand maternal father Raj Narayan Bose who was widely known in Bengali as the leader of the Adi Brahma Samaj and as "the grandfather of Indian Nationalism". From his early childhood he has shown the seeds of intellectual calibre. Manoj Das has remarked beautifully the early formations of the personality of Sri Aurobindo.

The English master under whom Aurobindo read early discerned in that boy germs of greatness. He was the best beloved of his masters. He was always quick at mastering his lessons. We can almost see the boy with his deep, wistful eyes, earnest and thoughtful, looking as it were, into futurity, moving about in the midst of a band of alien boys, gazing at times upon the beautiful face of Nature; sweet and gentle of disposition, this pure-hearted boy was the glory of the school.....<sup>7</sup>

His father belonged to a rich and highly accomplished family of Calcutta. He had been among the first to go to England

for his education. He became so much anglicised that he believed that India must adopt Western ways of life and manners. So naturally Aurobindo, in the early formative years of his life, grew up in an atmosphere steeped in Western ideas and culture. At the age of five Sri Aurobindo was admitted along with his two brothers to an Irish Nun's School at Darjeeling. Two years later they were taken to England and placed in care of a Latin Scholar, Mr. Drewett. Sri Aurobindo's early life in England seems to have been the most formative in his cultural make-up and intellectual equipment. Sri Aurobindo was only seven in 1879 and was probably considered too young to go to school and was therefore taught at home by the Drewetts. As he was studying at home, he read books according to his own taste like the Bible, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats and other writers. Sri Aurobindo not only developed a philosophical temper but also began to compose poems for the Fox's Weekly Magazine at that tender age. "Drewett was an accomplished Latin Scholar; he did not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in Latin that the head master of St. Paul's School took up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek and then pushed him rapidly into the higher classes of the school."<sup>8</sup>

From 1884 to 1889, Sri Aurobindo was a student of St. Paul's at London. The head master of the school, F.W. Walker gave specialized training in Greek language to Sri Aurobindo who progressed fast to higher classes and struck the teachers as a



prodigy. He won the Buttleworth prize for History and delivered a brilliant and powerful speech on the inconsistency of Swift's political opinion.

Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics at Manchester and St.Paul's, but even at St. Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course and spent most of his spare time in general reading specially English Poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient mediaval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Indian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time, too, in writing poetry.<sup>9</sup>

In 1890, Sri Aurobindo passed the last examination of St. Paul with merit and joined King's College of Cambridge. It was in his early school life in England, that he got exposed to the grandeur of the classics and the classical language, the enchantment of English verse and the sheer thrill of composing his own poems and the joy of seeing them published. His brother Man Mahon was a notable influence in motivating him in the field of versification. Describing his unusual attainment, G.W. Prothero, his tuter at King's College writes :

..... very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarship he possessed a knowledge

of English literature far beyond the average of undergraduates, and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen.<sup>10</sup>

Here he qualified in written examination of I.C.S. and stood XI in merit achieving highest marks in ancient languages. He, however, got himself disqualified in horse-riding. He was given another chance to pass the test, but he deliberately avoided presenting himself in time for the test, as he by that time ceased to have interest in the I.C.S.

Nothing detained him in his room. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage.<sup>11</sup>

He hated to become a collaborator and champion of the British rule in India. His peculiar aversion to the highly coveted service may be explained in his own words, "I appeared for the I.C.S. because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later, I found out what sort of work it is and I had a disgust for an administrator's life and I had no interest in administrative work."<sup>12</sup>

At Cambridge, besides participating in the activities of the Indian Majlis and cultivating his love for the freedom of the country, his chief engrossment was writing poetry. He was particularly adept in handling quantitative metres with ease. Shri

V.K. Gokak writes:

..... Sri Aurobindo, in his characteristic manner, created .... a new and complex body of rhythm that of quantitative metres. Sri Aurobindo's quantitative metres have not yet been assimilated, except by one or two admirers, for they are difficult to practise. But they open up new rhythms for any one that wishes to understand and practise them.<sup>13</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's years in Cambridge were undoubtedly the most impressionable years of his distinguished life. General upheavals and great revolutionary changes that were coming in the world, were making their strong and lasting impression on his highly receptive intellect. He began to take interest in the political scenario of India. Dr. K.D. Ghose used to send him the newspaper *The Bengali* with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen. Sri Aurobindo became a member of a secret revolutionary society. The Lotus and Dagger with an aim of fighting for the liberation of India. In the ideal of freedom, Sri Aurobindo was also particularly impressed by national movement in Ireland and the biography of Mazzini. Sri Aurobindo returned to India in 1893 and joined service in Baroda under the patronage of Maharaja of Baroda, Gaikwad Sayajirao. As soon as he set foot on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, he experienced an entirely unexpected and soothing sense of peace. In these moments, Sri

Aurobindo's soul seemed to transcend physical world and traversed supra- physical worlds and planes.

During his stay at Baroda, Sri Aurobindo and his brother Barin were also progressing in the field of spiritualism. In his letter to his wife, Sri Aurobindo wrote that he wanted to have direct experience of God by any means. At one time he visited the 'Shankaracharya Hill' in the Kashmir valley and experienced hollowness of physical existence in a telling manner. This experience left an indelible and powerful impression on his mind. His poetry became an impression of his numerous inner, spiritual and mystical experiences. His poems like- *The Godhead* and *Adwaita* are the songs of his transcendental and mystical experiences.

The Baroda period was actually the significant seed-time of Sri Aurobindo's life where he persued his varied interests-teaching, poetry and politics simultaneously. He read widely and most of his early writings are dated to this period. In 1885, a collection of his poems was published under the title *Songs to Myrtilla and other Poems*. He devoted himself to acquaint with the culture and the ideals of his motherland. He employed special tutors and quickly mastered Bengali and Sanskrit. Two great Bengali poets namely Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee left a great impression on him. Understanding of Sanskrit helped him in attaining knowledge of Indian philosophy and culture. R.R. Diwakar observes :

His acquaintance with Sanskrit was not restricted to religious or philosophical texts. He was equally at home with Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, the Ramayan, the Mahabharata as with the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Manusmriti.<sup>14</sup>

Sri Aurobindo wrote many English poems at Baroda and also began some which he finished later. His Bengali tutor speaks of Sri Aurobindo in his "Aurobindo-Prasanga" : "Desireless, a man of few words, balanced in his diet, self-controlled, always given to study."<sup>15</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was a voracious reader and his reading was not confined to any particular subject but it was diverse, varied and extended to different compartments of human knowledge. Sri Aurobindo's literary and spiritual growth was occurring simultaneously and both the influences got intermingled with each other. His devoted and arduous Yogic practices affected his consciousness and he started having access to sights and scenes by the invisible realms. At Chandod in one of the Kali temples on the banks of Narmada, Sri Aurobindo felt the living presence of the Divine Mother in the idol. This illuminating experience shattered his aversion to idol worship and became the subject matter of his poem 'The stone Goddess' included in his collected poems.



During his days in Bombay, Sri Aurobindo was practising more intense form of Yoga that resulted into the experience of the silent Brahman Consciousness. Such intense mystical experiences find echo in his sonnet "Nirvana".<sup>16</sup>

In those formative years, Sri Aurobindo's life was a balanced yet astonishing blend of diverse multifaceted aspects. He was a revolutionary, a thinker, a spiritual seeker and a poet. Till 1910, he was engrossed on several fronts. But a curious episode completely transformed the course of his life. One day when he was in the Karmayogin Office, a Divine Voice commanded him in three words, "Go to Chandernagare". Within ten minutes he was on a journey that led him to the place which was to become his permanent address for many long years to come. He himself calls Pondicherry his place of retreat, his cave of *Tapasya*. Sri Aurobindo's first four years in Pondicherry were, for him, a period of silent Yoga making his life lone, limitless, nude, and immense. He came to realize that all human activity was a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life. In 1914, Mira Alfassa Richard, a French lady of spiritual hankerings met Sri Aurobindo in his ashram and their meeting resulted in the publication of the well-known journal "Arya", a monthly philosophical review. Sri Aurobindo declared the aim of the journal as -

..... to feel out for the thought of the future, to help  
in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best

and most vital thought of the past ..... to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life .....<sup>17</sup>

For six years (1914-20) Sri Aurobindo was engrossed in uninterrupted writing, mainly consisting of his major prose works : *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Problem of Rebirth*, *Essays of the Gita*, *The Secret of Veda*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Future Poetry* and *The Foundations of Indian Culture*.

This was one of the most fruitful period of Sri Aurobindo's life. As his Yoga practice became more and more profound and absorbing, a touch of mysticism imbued his literary output. His early poems display raw mysticism which was replaced by an absorbing inborn, spiritual revelation in his later poems, *Meditations of Mandavya* (1913) marks the end of the early phase of his mysticism, where he declares:

I know, O God, the day shall dawn at last  
When man shall rise from playing with the mud  
And taking in his hands the sun and stars  
Remould appearance, law and process old,  
Then, pain and discord vanished from the world,  
Shall the dead wilderness accept the rose,

Symbolize as the integral perception of God. The last line of the poem

And the hushed desert, babble of its rills;

Man once more seem the image true of God.<sup>18</sup>

Talking about mystical trnsformation, Makrand R. Vajpayee holds that "The mystical experience is ongoing phenomenon, varying and changing rather than a final all transforming experience."

Such a gradual re-orientation of psyche was witnessed in Sri Aurobindo during the Pondicherry period. A set of sixty sonnets and about forty poems of new metres characterise the subtle yet peculiar change in Sri Aurobindo, the mystic and poet. The most famous among these are *The Bird of Fire*, *Thought the Paraclete*, *Rose of God*, *The Inner Fields* etc. In his poem *Rose of God*, Sri Aurobindo outpours ecstasies of the soul at the possibility of God's descent to earth. He quotes :

Rose of God, vermillion stain on the sapphires of heaven

Rose of Bliss, fire sweet, seven tinged with the ecstasies  
seven

Leap up in our heart of humanhood O Miracle, O Flame

Passion flower of the nameless, but of the mystical  
name.<sup>19</sup>

Here the "Rose" is the supreme symbol of the essence of God, heavenly glow, eternal bliss and these fuse together to symbolize as the integral perception of God. The tone of the poem

is essentially mystical.

Poetic inspiration is the illuminated impulse that fills the mind of the poet with the substance above ordinary sense perception. Sri Aurobindo's poetic inspiration was an amalgamation of Western literature, Indian mythology, Yoga, Mysticism and a profound feeling of Patriotism. But he was gifted with a rare ability to transform the original source into something distinct. He absorbs diverse influences and make them disappear in his own created originality. Accepting the influence of varied impressions. Sri Aurobindo says :

We are all those who went before us with something new added that is ourselves, and it is his something added that transfigures and is the real originality.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has acknowledged the influence of the poets that inspired him in writing poetry. In a letter, he writes:

I dare say some influence of most of the great English poets and of others also, not English, can be traced in my poetry- I can myself see that of Milton, sometimes of Wordsworth and Arnold; but it was of the automatic kind- they came in unnoticed, I am not aware of much influence of Shelley and Coleridge, but since I read Shelly a

great deal and took an intense pleasure in some of Coleridge's poetry, they may have been there without my knowledge. The one work of Keats that influenced me was *Hyperion*- I dare say my blank verse got something of his stamp through that.<sup>21</sup>

There was always present the vigour or strength of spirit in his poems from the very beginning, and this characteristic quality of his poems became highly sharp and ardent in his subsequent writings. It is because of deep knowledge of European literature, French, German and Italian no less than Greek and Latin. His poems carry the pulse of his heart and they have the felicity in action pleasantly. There is no doubt that he had been inspired by some eminent personalities in his juvenilia. As Milton brought forward the essential writings of his life- *Paradise Lost* written in his old age and *Comus* written in his twenty seventh year so also Sri Aurobindo wrote at the same age as Milton wrote *Comus* - namely, *Love and Death*. It is the highly accomplished poem of his early period in blank verse. It must be admitted that he has the actual influence of Milton. Undoubtedly, Milton is very much impressive than any other distinguished poets. In his *Paradise Lost*, he had gathered up Aeschylus and Sophocles Virgil, Lucretius and Dante. Fully absorbed with various literature and with the great tradition of poetry too, Sri Aurobindo shows the influence of diverse ages in *Love and Death* in which one hardly

realizes a sign of slavish derivativeness. There is originality which runs excessively throughout the poem.

*Love and Death*, as its very name implies, is a testament of the passionate heart and is a master piece of its own kind. It comprises of an indirect presage of Sri Aurobindo's later spiritual and scriptural power of expression. Here are some lines of majestic pathos.

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,  
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,  
measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.<sup>22</sup>

Here is an exact replica of Milton's "grand style severe" in Sri Aurobindo's poem.

Sri Aurobindo dedicated his *Love and Death* to his elder brother Manmohan Ghose who was very intimate with Stephen Philips and was himself a promising poet. Manmohan Ghose became a great inspiration for him in England. He stimulated Sri Aurobindo to read the classical poetry. Expressing his greatfulness to the influence of his elder brother, he writes:

Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged  
me from my childhood to be a poet. From your son  
my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in  
your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain  
and faltering footsteps.<sup>23</sup>

Even during the days when Sri Aurobindo was completely dedicated to the cause of freedom struggle, it was Manmohan Ghose who often reminded him of his natural inclination that was poetry. Radha Kumud Mookerji, an intimate friend, observes :

I still recollect how in those days his worthy brother Prof. Manmohan Ghose, himself a poet of Oxford repute, used to rush in utter anxiety to his brother Aurobindo to remind him that he was a born poet and should not plunge into politics.<sup>24</sup>

In some of his letters, Sri Aurobindo himself accepts the deep influence of Stephen Philips, Meredith, Tennyson, Swinburne and Arnold.

Since his childhood, Sri Aurobindo felt an inborn urge for rediscovering and reviving trends of vital thoughts of Indian philosophy and as he progressed in years as well as in experience, it became the predominant aspect of his life. In Pondicherry, his absorption in Yoga brought about an immense change in his temper and hankerings. Now his Yogic life was his most dominant engagement in his life and the goal of Yoga was the transformation or spiritualization of the ordinary material earthly life. Poetry written by Sri Aurobindo during this period reflects a deep sense of spiritualization that refuses to be deterred by earthly limits namely death, separation etc.

His quest to disseminate the divine message of spiritual and prophetic progression through the path of self-purification and Yoga, led him to the selection of the legend of Satyavan and Savitri in his grand epic *Savitri*. Savitri's legend presents a glaring instance of victory of human faith over the most ultimate inevitability of human life that is Death. It is intended to portray man's efforts for breaking the shackles of this limited material world. Purani mentions that Sri Aurobindo uses *Savitri* "as a means of Ascension".<sup>25</sup> Quoting Sri Aurobindo, he says : "I began with it (*Savitri*) on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I re-wrote from that level ..... Infact Savitri has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own Yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative."<sup>26</sup>

Yoga, literature, political activities and scholarly pursuits all diverse aspects of his own one life were not disjointed units rather these were coherently connected blocks fitted dexterously into his remarkable person. Describing his condition as a poet, as a result of the development of his spiritual capacities, he mentions at one place :

The poems came as a stream beginning at the first line and ending at the last .... *Savitri* is a work by itself unlike all the others ..... This last line (The



high boughs prayed in a revealing sky) (*Savitri* I Canto I) is an expression of an experience which I often had whether in the mountains or on the plains of Gujrat or looking from my window in Pondicherry not only in the down but at other times ..... To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event ..... A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to me an image but a fact ..... all that is spiritual or physiological in *Savitri* is of that character.<sup>27</sup>

Love conquering Death, a mystical tenet from the Upanishads form the Central theme of *Savitri*. For Sri Aurobindo, mysticism is a temper or a mood achieved through constant Yogic practice. Sri Aurobindo was a firm believer in the immortality of the soul, its rebirth after death and the doctrine of Karma. Savitri's battle is against the Karmic laws, she struggles not for herself but for the whole humanity to transform this earth into a 'Divine Land', a Paradise of bliss, spirituality and immortality.

*Savitri*, a blank-verse epic of 24,000 lines is the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's poetic career. Through *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo presents the picture of a spirituality matured woman

who leads mankind from darkness of ignorance to divine illumination. It is a cosmic epic that can stand on equal terms, both in quality as well as artistic craftsmanship, with other great epics of the world. Raymond Frank, an American Professor, who himself was inclined towards mysticism, glorifies *Savitri* in these words :

It is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of supramental spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled massiveness, magnificence and metaphorical brilliance - *Savitri* is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the absolute.<sup>28</sup>

The canvas of *Savitri* is as wide and extended as the entire universe and it touches the fringes of that untrodden world of light, consciousness, bliss and truth that still remain recognised by humanity. *Savitri* is the most authentic inner epic of the mind comprising mysticism, occultism, philosophy, spirituality and the process of evolution of man and matter.

Undoubtedly, Sri Aurobindo was a man of encyclopaedic knowledge on variety of subjects and it is the chief

reason of astounding variety of poetic themes in his literary works. He was a versatile genius, his life was immensely crowded with varied activities particularly academic, political, literary and spiritual. D.L. Murray, a great admirer of Sri Aurobindo commented after having read *The Life Divine*:

Infact, he is a new type of thinker one who combined in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

Different ways of truth which Sri Aurobindo felt, experienced and realised find an unequivocal echo in his literary output. *The Life Divine*, one of the most luminous prose works, presents age-old wisdom in a melo tone. R.R. Diwakar observes:

The name *Life Divine* whcih he chose for his philosophy can not be improved upon. In two small pregnant, the world of meaning that his connotes, is revealed.<sup>30</sup>

For Sri Aurobindo, Divine life was not an illusive dream to be lived after death, rather it is a journey of evolution to be carried forward on this earth. Growth of human life into fullness of the divine and reshaping earthly existence of man is the fundamental principle of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. In this respect he was an outstanding thinker who was propagating

something unexperienced, unexplored, unrealized but containing the essence of true nature of spiritual upliftment. S.K. Maitra writes:

If I am asked, who is the most creative thinker of the present day in the East? I will unhesitatingly answer, 'Sri Aurobindo' .... He is a seer with the same prophetic vision and the same explosive vision and the same explosive power of truth as the great sages of our land in the past, such as Manu or Yajnavalkya or Vyasa.<sup>31</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's poetic output is enormous. He wrote lyrics, sonnets, narrative poems, epics, poetic plays besides a number of translations and adaptations. For the convenience of study, his literary career may be divided into three phases. The early phase of his poetry covers the poems written during the Baroda period. Even in his poetry of juvenile age which bears the influence of Keats, Milton, Wordsworth and a host of other English poets, there is a freshness and a finish which suggests that from the beginning the artist went hand in hand with the visionary.

*Songs to Myrtilla*, the first published volume of verse of Sri Aurobindo was written during the 18th and 20th years of his life. It derives its inspiration from Greek, Latin and Romantic poetry. Not only in its subject matter but in its style also it bears marks of classical muse and reveals Aurobindo as a classical

scholar in the formation *A Rose of women*, *To the Kukoo*, *The Lost Deliverer* are fine and fluent compositions with an ever present note of melancholy. *Songs to Myrtilla*, a poetic dialogue between Glaucus and Aethon extols the glories and delights of earth and beauties of nature and world. Glaucus says :

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool  
 As to parched lips a running pool  
 Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep  
 And only moonlight rivulets creep  
 Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,  
 To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.<sup>32</sup>

The poems like *The Island Grave*, *The Lover's Complaint* and *Love in Sorrow* mark by a piognancy of grief are moving outbursts of powerful feelings of human heart.

Three poems - *Charles Stewart Parnell*, *Lines on Greland* and *His Jacket* were inspired by his sympathy for the misfortunes of Ireland. A few of Sri Aurobindo's early poems were posthumously published in a collection called *More Poems* (1957) which reveal the poet's deep interest in the classics.

*Urvasie*, the earliest of the poet's narrative poems, was written in 1893. The theme of eternal love between the nymph of Heaven Urvasie and a mortal hero Pururavus, their intensity for each other and their permanent natural union has received a superb

treatment from Sri Aurobindo, manifesting epic majesty in the display of almost all possible human emotions, be it a condition of tragic lull or a vibrant moment of passion. With *Urvasie*, Sri Aurobindo started his adventure in love in the narrative realm and seems to be preening his wings for a mightier flight. To quote Jesse Roarkee, "It is a lush and impetuous romantic work like nothing else in English poetry, a rich and beautiful blank-verse of astonishing expressiveness. It may be immature in some respects, but it is still both a finely inspired work and a more than respectable example of the poetic art."<sup>33</sup>

*Love and Death*, a master piece of blank-verse, *Baji Prabhou*, a patriotic composition and *Ilion*, an expressive lyric are other notable compositions of this period.

Sri Aurobindo's progress in spiritual advancement and his attainments in Yogic sphere find a clear reflection in the poetic creations of the middle phase. There are a number of short poems such as *Reminiscence*, *Revelation*, *God*, *Season*, *A Tree*, *Miracles*, *A child's Imagination*, *The Seat at Night* are poetic and condensed expressions of philosophical truths. In fact, it was during this phase that Sri Aurobindo developed a whole theory of Overhead poetry and in the poems of this period he tried to conquer "the human difficulties of the task" and create a body of mantric poetry that came as a proper culmination of his long, sustained and inspiring career as a poet in the English language. In

this phase Sri Aurobindo rendered his mystical experiences into magnificent poetic creations. *Invitation* a poem composed in Alipur jail suggests that reality comprises winter and rough weather no less than sunshine and vernal showers:

With wind and the weather beating round me  
 Upto the hill and the moorland I go  
 Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?  
 Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?  
 I am the lord of tempest and mountain,  
 I am the Spirit of freedom and pride  
 Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger  
 Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.<sup>34</sup>

The Nine poems ending with *Ahana* marks a milestone on the path of poetic development of Sri Aurobindo. In *Ahana*, the long poem in rhymed hexametre, the poet marks an attempt to explore the unexplorable realms of life, philosophy, conscious, unconscious and subconscious. The poem has element of mystery, debate and criticism that mark the poetry of his middle period. Sri Aurobindo gives impression to direct Yogic and mystical experience in rhythm and music something that was unachieved in English poetry till that day. His poetic work *Descent* lucidly conveys the nature of yogic inspiration :

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces  
 Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;

Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,  
Blaze in my, spirit.<sup>35</sup>

*A Bird of Fire*, *Thought the Paraclete* and *The Rose of God* are the poetic examples which display Sri Aurobindo's peak of excellence in presenting an amalgamation of mystic experiences and Yogic achievements. These poems aim to achieve in English verse something analogous to the Vedic mantra. The poems translate into practical achievement Aurobindo's theory of Overhead poetry.

The range of lyrical compositions of Sri Aurobindo is indeed wise. He could write even such satiric and sardonic lyrics as *A Dream of Surreal Science* and *Despair on the Stair Case*. In spite of these occasional experiments, at no period of his life was he blind to the spiritual reality behind the material facade. The world-view of Sri Aurobindo's poetry was surely to be reared on the sure foundations of his mystical and Yogic experiences.

During his days of retirement in his last phase, Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of mystical-meditative lyrics published as *Poems Past and Present* and *Last Poems* a collection of remarkable sonnets. Never before in the history of sonnets has any other poet put sonnets to such a wide use as Sri Aurobindo. In his crafty hands, sonnets became a vehicle of antological discourse inspired by some greater voice and mightier vision. Sonnets of Sri



Aurobindo has been criticised for lacking in vitality but this is more than made up for by inner character and consistency. However, most of his time of the last phase was taken up by Savitri which has been discussed in detail earlier.

Although Sri Aurobindo's genius was not dramatic, he has to his credit some fine poetic plays of the higher order. Handling blank verse with ease and expertise Sri Aurobindo wrote *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*. Perseus is a drama based on mythical story of ancient Greece; Vasavadutta is a tale from ancient India; Rodogune is a Syrian romance; the Viziers takes us back to the spacious days of the great Havoun-al-Rashid, while Eric is a romance of Scandinavia, a tale of love and war.

Translations of poetic creations from Sanskrit and Bengali by Sri Aurobindo are a class apart. *The Hero and the Nymph* is Sri Aurobindo's blank verse translation of Kalidasa's *Vikramarvasie* and there is no better translation of this play in English. *The Century of Life*, *Vidula* and *Songs of the Sea* are some other notable translations. These translations display a variety of rhythm and sureness of touch, all the attributes of standardization in translations.

Among the prose works of Sri Aurobindo only *The Life Divine*, *The Future Poetry* and his letters to his many friends, disciples and other correspondents is worth mentioning.

*The Future Poetry* is the poetics of Sri Aurobindo and shows at every step his acuteness of a literary critic. It reveals his profound knowledge of poetry and poetic art. In *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has worked out a well-reasoned theory of 'Overhead' sources of inspiration, through which alone a sublime and lofty poem can be composed. He presents poetry as a Divine utterance, only through 'Overhead' inspiration can poetry become mantirc.

The fundamental creative impulse of Sri Aurobindo's work is genuinely progressive. It presents before us the advanced stage of our psychological evolution. It gives us a glimpse of future in which man's power will not only plunge inward to his true psyche but also enhance our powers of consciousness. A dynamic divinity will envelope the whole mankind and will make them acquainted with the richest possible fulfilment of earth existence. Poetry will be strengthened by Yoga and vagueness and misconceptions about spirit and its multifarious dimensions will be erased. A new region of reality will be laid bare which will be unlike the achievements of the past ages. The poetic words and expressions of *The Future Poetry* will be found equal to Homer, Shakespeare and Valmiki and it will also be packed with super-human awareness which is man's profoundest archetype of his body, his vital force and his mind. Mystical verses are possible only from the inner level but the 'Inspiration' in the works of Sri Aurobindo is 'Overhead'.

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## CHAPTER-II

# HIS POETIC THEORY

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The detailed theoretic analysis of Sri Aurobindo's poetry can only be made where it is to be analysed on the principles of Indian Poetics. The abiding value of Poetry in Indian Poetics is attested by the persistence with which generation of critics- Indian as well as Western- have studied, discussed and defended it. By the poetry the average man means writings in verse. But in Indian Poetics *Alankara*, *Rasa*, *Dhvani* and *Vakrokti* work on the word *Kavya* (Poetry). It is used in a wider sense in order to bring into force the validity of human emotions. There are different kinds of poetry, creating the differences of temperament and culture, of tradition and purpose. But according to Indian Poetics:

The essence of poetry, then, is the enjoyment (*rasa*) of the cultivated reader rich in poetic sensibility, an enjoyment which is valued for its own sake and which on analysis involves the appreciation of distinct qualities (*gunas*) in style (*riti*)-qualities inheriting in form (*sabda*) as well as content (*artha*), and which more often than not reveal turns of speech or imagery (*alankaras*) deliberately made remote from the common ways of daily talk or of science.<sup>1</sup>

Again, Sri Aurobindo follows Indian Aesthetic while theorizing the norms of his poetry. To Sri Aurobindo, Aesthetic is concerned "mainly with beauty but more generally with *rasa*, the response of the mind, the vital feeling and the sense of certain taste in things which often may be but is not necessarily a spiritual feelings.<sup>2</sup> When Sri Aurobindo talks of *rasa*, and does not always show its affinity with religious motifs, he certainly refers to the theory of Emotion. The various *bhavas* (emotions) if they are transpersonalized for the sake of objective delineations of human behaviour, they reveal the highest truth of literature. Sri Aurobindo for his poetic theory quotes the two famous lines of John Keats;

Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty- that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

[Ode to a Grecian Urn]

These two lines denote the fact that "beauty" and "truth" are abstract metaphysical terms. The poet gives the metaphysics of the terms an earthly shape by revealing the universal validity of the abstract terms. According to Sri Aurobindo, the Overmind aesthesis forms the basis of all poetic creation. The term aesthesis in his poetry is meant for a reaction of the consciousness, mental and vital and bodily. This reaction creates the sense of the taste or flavour which is defined in Indian Poetics as *rasa*.

Sri Aurobindo follows the instance of Indian Poetics

approach of relating physical objects (*rūpa*) and the approach of



where in one is reminded continuously the poetic theory- a theory that suggests the physical and spiritual levels of meanings. The right meaning of the poetry according to Sri Aurobindo and according to the great Vedic tradition can be appreciated by the connoisseur (*sahrdaya*):

Poetry depends for its existence not only on the experience of the poet and the diction adopted by the poet but on the appreciative genius of the connoisseur who is endowed with such a fine aesthetic sensibility as to allow the recreation of the experience to take rest in his mental plane.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his conception and theory of poetry suggests two things in general: the physical and the spiritual levels of human emotions. The suggestive pattern in his poetry helps him recreate his experience, which is nothing but relishable, in the minds of the readers and it is due to the operation of the suggestion that the most deformed is transformed into the most beautiful, the most unpleasant into the most attractive.

There comes a kind of conversion of various stages of emotions. This process of conversion is regarded as the process of poetic idealization in the language of the Western Aesthetics which also acknowledges the power of poetry "to generate supreme and instantaneous bliss."<sup>4</sup> The two approaches: the approach of relishing physical objects (*rasa*) and the approach of

the supreme bliss (Anandam theory) become suggestive of the theoretic norms of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Sri Aurobindo in his theory of poetry regards "yoga" and "bhoga" as the necessary parts of the poetic evolution. Rasa, which, passing through the mind or sense or both, awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste. Bhoga can awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment. The concept of *bhoga* is contrary to the Western concept of materialistic pursuits; It is the spiritual process in *Indian Poetics* which leads to realization of the mind's deeper points and the spiritual height of human thinking. Sri Aurobindo himself analyses the importance of Rasa, Bhoga and Ananda for his poetic principles:

Poetry, like all art, serves the seeking for these things, this *Aesthesis*, this *Rasa*, this *Bhoga*, this *Ananda*; it brings us a Rasa of word and sound but also of idea and, through the idea, of the things expressed by the word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual images of their form, quality, impact upon us or even..... of their world essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things.<sup>5</sup>

The various properties of the word (connotative, denotative and suggestive) yield the final/the highest aesthetic

experience; and if this experience is expressed through the medium of words, it becomes *mantric poetry* at the instance of *The Bhagvad Gita*. Thus, Sri Aurobindo is to transform even the physical life into the life divine. He sets some definite instances in literature and some new dimensions to the theory of poetry. As a seer and Rishi, Sri Aurobindo has enriched the human mind with his unique aesthetic vision. His Yogic life did not interfere in his artistic life though it might have inspired him to create the high norms/objectivisation in his literary creations. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold, T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards, Sri Aurobindo hardly deals with the definition of poetry. Nevertheless, he places the art of poetry to a great position and calls the poetic creation as the *mantras* which are to be followed for making life divine. In his magnum opus, *Savitri*, which will be analysed for the application to his poetic theory in this and other core chapters, uses the truly spiritualized terms repeatedly such as "soul", "divataman", "the pychic being", "the spark of soul" etc. A poet of soul is the creator of spiritual joy, "Ananda"; the poetry is not merely a sensuous exercise, but it is mysterious which the highest bliss that enlightens human mind and soul. To Sri Aurobindo, the poetry as synthesis lives in the harmonious relationships of vision of truth, passion for beauty and the quest for joy. It becomes the soul that sustains the breath of human life. To quote his own words:

A poetry which is all thought and no life or a

thought which does not constantly keep in touch with and refresh itself from the fountains of life..... elegant or cultured philosophizing or moralizing in skilled verse, even if it has vision and intellectual beauty, suffers always by lack of fire and body, wants perfection of grasp and does not take full hold on the inner being to seize and uplift as well as sweeten and illumine, as poetry should do and all great poetic writing does. The function of the poet even when he is most absorbed in thinking, is still to bring out not merely the truth and interest, but the beauty and the power of truth, its life and emotion, and not only do that, not only to make the thought a beautiful and living thing but to make it one thing with life.<sup>6</sup>

The citation under analysis brings three major works for a poet in his creation: the beauty and the power of thought, the expression of truthfulness and their relevance to the life of man on the earth. The abstract form of the poetic creation is suggested to its concrete form. Poetry, to Sri Aurobindo, should not deal with the revelation of sensuous, intellectual, and imaginative aspects of life only, but it must work out the inner and the spiritual life of man through the use of appropriate words; it should become the rhythmic voice of life. The poet as a seer and as a *rishi* is gifted

with the ideation of sensing the inner most spiritual life. This kind of poetry "will be the voice and rhythmic utterance of our greater, our total, our infinite existence, and will give us the strong and infinite sense, the spiritual and vital joy, the exalting power of a greater breath of life."<sup>7</sup>

The application to his theoretic principles can be made with the following lines of his *magnum opus*, *Savitri*. Savitri as an ordinary girl serves the highest purpose for three things: the physical aspects of human life, the sadhana of a yogi and the combination of these two experiences for realizing the higher norms of human life :

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,  
 Its message enters stirring the blind brain  
 And keeps the dim ignorant cells its sound  
 The hearer understands a form of words  
 And, musing on the index, thought it holds,  
 He strives to read it with the labouring mind  
 But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:  
 Then, falling silent in himself to know  
 He meets the deeper listening of his soul:  
 The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains  
 Thought, vision, feeling, sense the body's self  
 Are seized unutterably and he endures  
 An ecstasy and an immortal change

He feels a Wilderness and becomes a Power  
 All knowledges rushes him like a sea  
 Transmuted by the white spiritual ray  
 He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,  
 Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech.<sup>8</sup>

In the textual citation of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo stresses *repeatedly* on the terms "ignorant cells", "the deeper listening of his soul" and the capital form of "Word" which become symbolic of the mysterious powers of the words. The "ecstasy" creates the sense of "Samadhi" which denotes the transcendental form of the poetry and the higher role of the poet. What it creates can be explained in the words of C.D. Narasimhaiah :

But the poem bears witness to the fact that the poet becomes a witness (*sakshi*) to the *bhavakatva vyapara* (creative process) of the *Maker* and we are invited to participate in the new and ever new imaginative acts *nava navomesha saloni pratibha-* the sparks that emanate from the smithy of *Viswakarma* (the creator) seem to be onomatopoeic illustrations of the term *nava navomesha*.<sup>9</sup>

In his Yogic experiences, Sri Aurobindo makes Yoga a collective entity. This is perhaps the reason that Sri Aurobindo has the

validity of the universal movement for the progress of human being. He has the least desire for his personal salvation, he, instead regards the well being of the entire humanity. He rather creates in his poetic creation a new order and harmony and unity and fixes in the supramental consciousness in the earth consciousness in order to lead a man to divine consciousness. A few poems of Sri Aurobindo such as "The Self Infinite", "Surrender", "The Divine Worker", "The Golden Light" and "Transformation" describe the thematic contents of the Overmind.

Sri Aurobindo holds that the poet not only gets the inspiration from the Power Overhead but also receives dictats for his composition :

There would be no difficulty if the inspiration came through without obstruction or interference in a pure transcript- that is what happens in a poet's highest or freest moments when writes not at all out of his own external human mind but by inspiration, as the mouthpiece of the Gods.<sup>10</sup>

Sri Aurobindo worked very hard in the composition of his masterpiece *Savitri* and this poem becomes an ideal about the poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo. The following lines bring into being Sri Aurobindo's poetic credo and the divine inspiration at par :

On inspiration with her lightening feet,  
 A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,  
 Traversed the soundless corridors of his mind  
 Bringing her rhythmic sense of hidden things  
 A music spoke transcending mortal speech  
 As if from a golden phial of the All-bliss  
 A joy of light, a joy of sudden sight,  
 A rapture of the thrilled *undying word*  
 Poured into his heart as into an empty cup  
 A repetition of God's first delight  
 Creating in a young and virgin Time  
 In a brief moment caught, a little space,  
 All knowledge packed into great wordless thought.<sup>11</sup>

Even before the composition of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo experiences the higher motifs of life; he practices the Yogic activities. Roman Rolland described him as "the last of the Rishis". "The poet is always a symbol, the highest point of contemporary consciousness. A representative man or deputy of the aspiring world."<sup>12</sup> Sri Aurobindo's essential poetry is a natural fruit of his interior life or inward grace. A gift appropriate to the giver, it is in the effect the recovery of our buried self.

To these high-raised dominions of the Self  
 Too far from our surface nature's postal routes



Too lofty for our moral lives to breathe

Deep in us are responsive elements.<sup>13</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's first book of poetry *Songs to Myrtilla* (1895) describes his creative talent. A few poems such as "A Rose of Women" and "To the Cuckoo" exhibit fine and fluent English. It can be seen even in the opening lines of the cuckoo poem :

Sounds of the wakening world, the year's increase,  
 Passage of wind and all her dewy powers  
 With breath and laughter of new-bathed flowers  
 And that deep light of heaven above the trees  
 Awake mid leaves that muse in peace  
 Sweet noise of birds, but most in heavenly showers  
 The cuckoo's voice pervades the hours.<sup>14</sup>

Sri Aurobindo also adopted the tradition of Sanskrit Poetics more specifically in his long and narrative poems. In Sanskrit theory of poetry, the obscure is thus treated with contempt and as a natural corollary to it. Lucidity or perspicuity is commended, being admitted as an excellence which makes a specimen of literary art really appealing. In theory the emotive content attains prominence. The organismic theory of poetry as enunciated by Anandavardhana is accepted practically without any challenge by later theoreticians. The concept of beauty of Sri Aurobindo comes near to the theoretician of Sanskrit Poetics.

Appaya, infact, acquiesces with the learned Dhvanikara in conceiving of the best type of poetic art as one characterised by the inexplicably charming implicit; and Jagannatha advancing a step further connects the concept of Beauty with the concept of Rasa, implying thereby his agreement with the proposition that poetry always leads to disinterested and super mundane bliss and consequently poetry itself is beauty.<sup>15</sup>

The Urvasie theme has been an old favourite of Indian poets. In the Aurobindean version it is passion more than penance that is a felt quality, the passion for love and the passion for beauty. The king, Pururavus, who prays to the silent Himalayas: "Give her back to me, O mountain, give her back." *Urvasie* belongs to the poet's early writings. It is a long narrative poem in four cantos, and details the well known legend of king Pururavus and the heavenly nymph, Urvasie. It's motif is love. The meeting of lovers provides one of the most glowing passages in the poem, *Urvasie*;

She a leaf

Before a gust among the nearing trees

Cowered. But, all a sea of mighty joy

Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,

With a great cry and glad Puraravus

Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,

Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair  
 Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming,  
 Over the shoulder of Pururavus  
 And on his cheeks a softness. She o'er borne  
 Panting with inarticulate murmurs lay,  
 Like a slim tree half seen though driving hail,  
 Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek  
 And golden throat averted, and wide trouble  
 In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss  
 With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts  
 Tumultous up against his beating heart,  
 He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire  
 So clung they two as shipwrecked in a surge  
 Then strong Pururavus, with golden eyes,  
 Mastering hers, cried tremulous: O beloved  
 O miser of thy rich and happy voice,  
 One word, one word, to tell me that thou lovest.  
 And Urvasie, all broken on his bosom,  
 Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out,  
 From her imprisoned breasts,

My Lord! My love.<sup>16</sup>

The poet has made effective use of a number of  
 Homeric similes in it. Canto-I narrates the heroic rescue of Urvasie  
 by Pururavus from the hands of Cayshie, the demon, who was

running off with her. This generates the deep suspense in love between the king and Urvasie. A fine reference to Urvasie's dear companions - Menaca, Misra, Cayshie, Mullica, Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie, Lolita, Lavonya and Tilottama (P. 40)- has been made. Canto II seems to be uninspired for the most part. It describes the scene in Paradise, the dance of the divine girls, Urvasie's dear folly, Bharuth's great anger at it, and her subsequent exile to earth, towards the close, it becomes animated and surcharged with passion. Canto III depicts the deep love between "the glorious pair", the birth of a child from the golden Urvasie, the return of Pururavus along with Urvasie and the child to his kingdom, the popular welcome they received; the return of Urvasie to Paradise; and his leave- taking of his subjects after having relinquished the throne in favour of his worthy son, Ayus. This canto is interesting enough. Canto IV gives the account of the wandering of Love-Lorn Pururavus in forests, meadows, and dales. He is sore over the departure of Urvasie and his own lonliness. He says:

She is not here; though every mystic glade  
 And Sunbright pasture breathe alone of her  
 And quiver as with her presence, I find not  
 Her very limbs, her very face; yet dreamed  
 That here infallably I should restrain  
 Her fugitive feet or hold her by the robe. (P. 73)

There are brilliant flashes of nature-poetry in it. The king is charged, by the patron-goddess of Aryasthan, of neglecting his duties and "a nation's destinies" for the sake of his own passion. But the Mighty Mother, to whom the king had been sent by the patron-goddess, tells him that though he has failed in his kingly charge, God will neither blame nor punish him (P. 80). Pururavus makes a passage to the upper regions and attains an immortal's status to be forever united with Urvasie :

And they were left alone in that clear world  
 Then all his soul towards her leaning, took  
 Pururavus into his clasp and felt,  
 Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his  
 Of Urvasie, his love, so pressing back  
 The longed-for sacred face, lingering he kissed.  
 Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied. (P. 82)

Urvasie anticipates Savitri in many ways. Both deal with symbolic interpretations of Hindu legends. The Mighty Mother in Urvasie suggests the World Mother in Savitri. Both follow the epic patterns and employ blank verse for serious purposes.

The poet was deeply impressed by the Urvasie legend. He, thus, rendered into English Kalidasa's play, Vikramorvasie (The Hero and the Nymph). He also wrote a short poem of 62 lines entitled "Urvasie" (More Poems, P.P. 51-53). It has been suggested that Sri Aurobindo considered this theme for his epic of human

aspiration (as Savitri is) before finally adopting the Savitri legend.

In 'Love and Death' indomitable Love is presented as gaining victory over Death. That is what we found in Urvashie, and that is what we find here. In Love and Death, Ruru invades Patala (Hades) to reclaim his beloved, Priyumvada, who dies untimely of snake-bite. He willingly barter away half his own life to live the other half with his beloved restored to life. The legend reminds one of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice, with the difference that Orpheus could not bring his beloved back to earth. The youthful love of Ruru and Priyumvada before her death is presented as follows :

To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,

To her all the world was filled with his embrace.(P.85)

Ruru, after her death, challenges Death with determination in a heroic fashion:

Somewhere, I know not where,

Some how, I know not how, I shall confront.

Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands

And prove what thou art and what man. (P. 92)

The lines describing the re-union of Ruru and Priyumvada are really memorable :

### Sighing

With a slight sob she woke and -

- earthly large

Her eyes looked upward into his-

-she stretched

Her arms up, yearning, and their souls -

-embraced

Then twixt brief sobbing laughters and -

-blissful tears

Clinging with all her limbs to him, -

-"O love,

The green, green world; the warm sun-

-light!" and ceased,

Finding no words; (P. 115)

Love emerges triumphant ultimately. The poem makes elaborate use of similes and metaphors. Its sustained poetic grandeur pleases us. In it we have a youthful vitality combined with an intense love of life. Some of the notable events of the poem are : the profound love of Ruru and Priyumvada, the pathetic cry of the dying girl, the self- exaltation of Kamadev, and the sickening picture of Hell.

Speaking of Urvasie and Love and Death, Dr. Iyengar has observed that both the narratives "are quarried from the ranges of deathless Romance, for Pururavus and Ruru are great lovers,

and Urvashie and Priyumvada are truly worthy of their love."<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Iyenger is quite correct in this observation, but he seems to go wide the mark when he remarks that "the lovers have somehow failed, and have, after all, preferred the lesser realization of personal felicity to the greater realization of world redemption and transformation."<sup>18</sup> The truth is that both the poems have successfully attempted the victory of Love over Death and the lovers have not failed.

Even in his early poetry, Sri Aurobindo follows the Vedic height of literary creations and works out successfully the principles of Indian Poetics. The skill of the great poet lies in his successful employment of the poetic function of suggestion. It is competent to bring into expression a reliable symbol of experience which is understood by the refined reader when the provocations of its imagery reverberate in his mind. And in the whole process of this transference of the symbol of the poet's experience, the diction and image play very important role, because it is out of the language and the objects of the language that the poet makes a reliable symbol of his experience. The end of poetry, according to Indian Aesthetics

is represented by attainment of blissful experience which is transferred to the reader by the poet through the medium of language characterized by the magical phrase and the charming poetic figure



..... This is the stand of both the Western and Indian Aesthetics on the nature of poetry and the status of the poetical elements in relation to the centre of gravity represented by the blissful experience.<sup>19</sup>

His next book of early poems brings into being the concept and theory of poetry. The mood and manners in the composition of these early poems reflect his yielding to the philosophic matter. An unequal volume, there are, however, exceptions to the philosophizing mood. For example in a poem like "Who", he sings with perfect gaiety and buoyancy of a philosophic poet :

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of a woman  
 In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl,  
 The hand that set Jupiter spinning through Heaven,  
 Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl  
 These are His works and His veils and His shadows  
 But Where is He then? by what name is He known?  
 Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?  
 Bodied or bodiless? twain or alone?  
 All Music is the sound of His laughter,  
 All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;  
 Our lives are His heart-beats, our raptures the bridal  
 Of Radha and Krishna, Our love is their bliss.<sup>20</sup>

As in the case in Indian Aesthetics that the function of poetry lies in using such myths and symbols as to create the secret zone of truth. Sri Aurobindo raises an important question for the form of God- a Vedantin Concept. The question "is He a Brahma or Vishnu?", and again "bodied or bodiless", creates the dialectics of the form and the nature of God in Indian mythology.

Again, one feels an increase of the individual accent in "In the Moon light". Characteristically the poet thinks of the process of infinite instead of thinking of the romantic musings. From his life at Baroda, Sri Aurobindo engrossed deeply in Yogic experiences. In his letter published in the volumes of the Centenary edition, he elaborates his experiences:

There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movements of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movements of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone..... This condition remained unimpaired for several months and even when the sense of unreality disappeared and there was a return to participation in the world- consciousness, the inner peace and freedom which resulted from

this realization remained permanently behind all surface movements and the essence of the realization itself was not lost.<sup>21</sup>

He even chooses the historical personalities for his poetic creation for two major purposes : the epical narratives; and for the intellectual debate and solution for the nationalistic zeal among the masses of the country. In Baji Prabhou, he does not deal with the natural sights of the Himalaya or the moon light or the tortured mind of modern Hamlets but the searching Deccan Plateaus and the background of the battle :

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare  
Oppressed the earth, the hills stood deep in haze,  
And sheltering a thirst the fields glared up  
Longing for water in courses long parched  
Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky  
Sought an escape for the wide trance of heat.<sup>22</sup>

In Sri Aurobindo, Baji has found "a ministrel worthy of his imperishable sacrifice".<sup>23</sup> The poem is written in vigorous blank verse and the diction is charged with passion and power. He chooses an epical episode from Maratha history, Baji Prabhou's defence of George against the superior and overwhelming Moghul army. There can be little doubt that the choice of theme, including tribute to Bhabani, "goddess formidable who watches over India till the end"<sup>24</sup>, was the expressive of the poet's own intense

nationalism. The marital mood is also reflected in the free translation of "Vidula" from the *Mahabharata*. Here one finds the upbraiding of the queen mother for her faltering son, Sanjoy :  
 "Warrior; wake! I have laboured to provoke the will, the strength of thy heart within."<sup>25</sup>

The poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo includes the norms of beauty and truthfulness being set simultaneously in his poetic creation.

Sri Aurobindo believes that love and beauty are the sources of Joy, Ananda as light and knowledge are of consciousness. God can be found only in the highest joy, and this is the reason why the spiritual joy makes life beautiful, wonderful and resplendent to man. No wonder poetry, which is inspired and governed by spirituality, can exert a healthy impact on the life of the reader. Spiritual Joy or Ananda is the highest form of human vision. Ananda - fathomless, indivisible joy-has love and beauty as its two most important ingredients. The highest delight, the spiritual joy, which makes life lovable and beautiful, is attainable only through the realization of, and close contact with, God. Poetry, in Sri Aurobindo's opinion, should aim at embodying this spiritual delight, for only then it will exercise a wholesome influence over the life of man. The poet discovers within himself, or in the world around him, a profoundly spiritual vision which clothes everything in celestial Joy- Ananda. The reason of this is not far to seek. The

Vedic religion, according to which spirit is the foremost and ultimate reality, explains it convincingly, Brahma is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, and is the ultimate reality. Life emanates from Brahma, or the spirit, and ultimately merges into it. Thus, man is only an ingredient of Brahma, God, or the spirit. Inevitably, the spirit in him drives him towards Him. This accounts for Sri Aurobindo's preoccupation with the poetry of Spirit, about which he states :

This can only come if the mind of the race takes actually the step over which it is now hesitating and passes from the satisfaction of the liberated intellect which has been its preoccupation for the last two centuries to the pursuit of the realization of the larger self, from the scrutiny of the things that explain to the experience of the things that reveal, the truths of the spirit.<sup>26</sup>

A very basic feature of Sri Aurobindo's poetics is the fusion of the spirit and the material world. To him, the transcendent and the aesthetic are absolutely inseparable from each other. The Matter and the Spirit are wedded to each other; the body and the soul are one, having no independent entities of their own. No doubt, art in all its forms is fundamentally concerned with the perception of beauty; Thus, great poetry, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the Energy of Transcendent; it is "the rhythmic voice of life ..... one of

the inner and not one of the surface voices."<sup>27</sup> Infact, it presents inner beauty, an assessment of inner life. Obviously, the poet is not different from the spiritualist, though the two seem to be two entirely different beings. The spirit and the material world become one unified whole in great poetry, despite the fact that to an artist the world is real, while to the spiritualist the spirit is real and the world is illusion. Apparently, to Sri Aurobindo, the transcendent and the aesthetic are inalienable. No wonder he asserts that art is spiritual, having its basis in sensuous reality. What he professes, he has realized in his own life as is evident from his record of one of his unique epiphanies, moments of spiritual revelations :

Since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Appollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not discovered from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supra-physical world and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane.<sup>28</sup>

Apparently, Sri Aurobindo holds that to gain strength in poetic art, as in any other sphere of work, power or Shakti is needed. Just as in Hindu philosophy, Shakti is inalienable from

Shiva, likewise force is inseparable from being. The artist, who needs power continually, can acquire it through profound Sadhana, dedication. Thus, he believes in the Indian concepts as stressed by some of the modern Indian English authors like Tagore and Raja Rao. Sri Aurobindo not only talked of Sadhana, but also practised it in his life. His intense yoga, Sadhana infused him with immense power enabling him to attain supra-mental consciousness in his life on the earth. Through Sadhana, he grasped his true self, and combined the various parts of his self to see the Divine in others. According to him, in yoga, work is as invaluable as Bhakti or meditation, for work done with utmost sincerity and spirit of renunciation transports man's consciousness close to the Divine. Thus, his concept of Purna yoga is the unification of knowledge, work, devotion and meditation, stemming from man's deep urge for the Divine.

To the common man who is not able to grasp poetry, it is "nothing more than aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear, a sort of elevated pastime."<sup>29</sup> It is true that everyone expects pleasure from poetry, but the delight that poetry affords us cannot be comprehended through intelligence, imagination or senses because they are only its instruments; the poetic delight is the creation of the soul and hence it can be understood only through the soul. Apropos of this Sri Aurobindo states :

Therefore poetry has not really done its work, at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument end transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul. A Divine Ananda, a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative- one might almost say, and inverse reflection of the joy which the universal soul has felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe- the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into its original creative vision- such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. And this delight is not merely a godlike pastime; it is a great formative and eliminative power.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, Sri Aurobindo is of the view that despite faulty poetic technique, a gifted soul is capable of creating great poetry which may captivate human mind for centuries. Technique, according to him, is not as invaluable for poetry as for any other art. The reasons are two : first, the instrument of poetry- the rhythmic word- is more full of immaterial and subtle elements than of any other art-form; secondly, the instrument of poetry, being the most



suggestive, supple and complex of all the instruments of art-forms, has immense possibilities in various directions. The rhythmic word, with its sense and sound, has a soul value, a spiritual power which is absolutely inalienable from it and which is something beyond the mere mechanical construction. This is the reason why the poet, of all artists, is least concerned with the technique of his art. In fact, at the height of creation, he forgets all but the technical side of the poetic creations, and his sound-movement and style emanate naturally from his soul. Hence, he considers poetry as the highest human speech-form. Inevitably, Sri Aurobindo infers :

So poetry arrives at the indication of infinite meanings beyond the finite intellectual meanings the world carries. It expresses not only the life-soul of man as did the primitive word, not only the ideas of his intelligence for which speech now usually serves, but the experience, the vision, the ideas, as we may say, of the higher and wider soul in him. Making them real to our life- soul as well as present to our intellect, it opens to us by the word the doors of the spirit.<sup>31</sup>

The another phase in the poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo includes the principles of the meditative and mystic poetry. Mystic poetry ordinarily does not deal with the analytic and the descriptive mode of expression. There is a difference between

the spiritual and the mystic poetry. If, however, the spirit speaks out of choice or necessity- an alien language in a strange manner e.g., that of a profane consciousness, or of the consciousness of another domain, idealistic or philosophical or even occult, puts on or initiates "spirit's language and manner, we have what we propose to call mystic poetry."<sup>32</sup> This period of Sri Aurobindo's creative genius includes *Six Poems, Transformation and Other Poems*. The first poem of the collection is: "The Bird of Fire". The poem consists of the two symbols : the "bird" which is suggestive of human soul; and the word "fire" symbolizes the divine love on its higher plan and the passion signifies the lower zone of human emotions. The symbolic application in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo is the original base and hence it appears very difficult to interpret in the common language :

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird  
Of flame went glimmering over a sunfire curve to the  
haze of the west,  
Skimming, a messenger soul, the sapphire - summer  
waste  
Of a soundless, wayless burning sea.<sup>33</sup>

The next poem is "The Life Heavens" which describes the blissful life of yogi. The poet suggests that man can experiment this blissful life on the earth with earthly objects.

All things are a harmony faultless, pure;

Grief is not nor stain-wound of desire

The heart- beats are a cadence bright and sure

Of joy's quick steps, too invincible to tire.<sup>34</sup>

The line of the poem- "I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven"- becomes the best points of Aurobindian theory of poetry. He justifies the claims, and says that "it holds in itself that possibility implied in the presence of the suppressed Divine here- which does not exist in the perfection of the vital (or even the mental) Heavens."<sup>35</sup>

At the later stage, which includes his *Magnum opus*, *Savitri*, the poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo becomes evolutionary. By the process of evolution, he means that a man can attain the status of superman if he constantly pursues the Yogic experiences in his/her life. The evolutionary of Charles Darwin influenced Sri Aurobindo. At the instances of Jainism and Buddhism, Sri Aurobindo perfects the philosophy of *Dhyanas*, *Samadhi* and *Yogic* trances. As opposed to the older assumption Sri Aurobindo in his poetic theory accepted the reality of the world, revealed by science. He also accepted the social challenge and the task of charging the socio - political structure of the world :

Freud, Jung and Sri Aurobindo think that social improvement can come about by improving the

individual. This stand is consistent with the age old tradition of the Indian sages who started with the dictum of self- conquest. But society is the life-blood of each individual. In a socialist pattern of society, the individuality is preserved and is yet transcended. Socialism gives meaning to each individual by using and harnessing it in the service of the whole state and the state itself is shaped through an ever increasing evaluation of its moves by a society of intellectuals.<sup>36</sup>

The poet, who thinks of bringing the evolutionary in man's spiritual and worldly attainments, can really be regarded the right theoretician of the poetry; for the ultimate object of poetry, if all literary creation is to ameliorate the condition of man from lower impulses of the physical world to the higher imaginative power.

The theory of evolution in Sri Aurobindo's poetry lies in revealing the growth of human culture from the primitive barbarian to the civilized and cultured man of society. This evolution can hardly be called a biological evolution. To Sri Aurobindo, man is essentially a socio-cultural animal. What is distinctively human can grossly be defined as the process of culture. Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other activities of man received from society he inherits from. The habit of acquiring the social

elements makes the cognized mode which can be renamed as the process of culture. The biological inheritance should not be supposed as the process of handing down from man to man. Culture thus becomes a living force and that can be acquired through long and complex interaction between heredity and environment :

Culture, however, is something else. It is wholly acquired by human beings from other human beings and not only by children from their parents as in biological heredity. Heredity does determine that a person can learn to speak languages, but it does determine which language he will learn or what he will say. Biological heredity does not transmit characters which a human individual has acquired during his/her life time, but culture transmits only such characters.<sup>37</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his theory of poetry does not evade from materialism ; but out of the materialistic approach, the highest point of spiritualism can be accomplished. Both the material dialectics of Marx and the spiritual evolution of Sri Aurobindo lead to the brightness of future. To Marx, it is the society, without the powers of the state, in which there hardly exists any kind of exploitation of man by man. To Sri Aurobindo, it is the emergence of Supermind or a race of Gnostic that is inevitable. Both Sri

Aurobindo and Marx desire that an individual should co-operate in the historical dialectics of society. Sri Aurobindo desires to bring the perfection in the society through enunciating the process of the spiritual evolution. It is this knowledge which will save both the writer and the reader. But above all, it is through this means that we are able to see the real. Sri Aurobindo in his letter on *Savitri* explains how he has merged the material approach of life with the spiritual height in order to form the whole of life:

As a matter of fact in the passage itself earth in its wheeling does come into the dawn and pass from darkness into the light. You must take the idea as a whole in all its transitions and not press one detail with too literal and insistence. In the poem I present constantly one partial view of life or another temporarily as if it were the whole in order to give full value to the experience of those who are bound by that view, as for instance, the materialist conception and experience of life, but if any one charges me with philosophical inconsistency, then it only means that he does not understand the technique of the Overmind interpretation of life.<sup>38</sup>

The philosophic principle of Overmind holds that it is only the inner change, as one finds in the journey image of Savitri herself, that can bring about the change in outer conditions in so

far as the outer conditions are the product of human actions. The spiritualist, therefore, emphasizes the need and the primacy of radically changing the human psyche. The following lines from *Savitri* bring into being the broader vision between the matter and the spirit showing the poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo :

In the impalpable field of secret self  
 This little outer being's vast support  
 Parted from vision by earth's solid fence  
 He came into a magic crystal air  
 And found a life that lived not by the flesh  
 A light that made visible immaterial things  
 A fine degree in wonder's hierarchy  
 The kingdom of subtle matter's fancy craft  
 Outlined against a sky of vivid hues  
 Leaping out of a splendour-trance and haze  
 The wizard revelation of its front  
 A world of lovelier forms lies near to ours,  
 Where undisguised by earth's deforming sight,  
 All shapes are beautiful and all things true  
 In that lucent ambience mystically clear  
 The eyes were doors to a celestial sense,  
 Hearing was music and the touch a charm,  
 And the heart drew a deeper breath of power,  
 There dwell earth-nature's shining origins  
 The perfect plans on which she moulds her works.<sup>39</sup>

All Sri Aurobindo's works lead up to *Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol*. He had been at work upon the poem for years, made several revisions. Sri Aurobindo did not complete it fully unless he was fully satisfied with the merit of the work according to his standard. Yet he was fully aware that the appeal of the poem did not come to its level. The theme of the poem is the legend by which a faithful wife attains the highest spiritual status. The absence of outward action, the prolonged interior dialogues, the massive flashbacks become the theoretic points which bring the cultural norms into operation. Its inner motifs become the motifs of poetic theory. Sri Aurobindo himself tells the beginning of *Savitri* about its theoretic norms:

A message from the unknown Immortal Light  
 Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,  
 Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues  
 And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours  
 An instant's visitor the godhead shone  
 On life's thin border awhile the Vision stood  
 And bent over earth's pondering forehead curve.  
 Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss  
 In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense  
 It wrote the lies of significant myth  
 Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,  
 A brilliant code penned with the sky for page



Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed

Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares.<sup>40</sup>

This epic is not an allegory, a philosophy or a doctrine, but it is a book, which is based on the real experience of a Rishi. In the words of K.D. Sethna, "to create a poetic mould equally massive and multiform as *The Life Divine* ..... such a task is incumbent on one who stands as the maker of a new spiritual epoch scattered and short pieces of poetry can not build that sustained *weltanschauung* required for epic or drama can - *Savitri* is from every angle the right co-relate,"<sup>41</sup> to Sri Aurobindo's total effort and status as a poet, its crown jewel. Little attempt has been made so far to relate it - "the poetry of tomorrow", as the Mother once said- with world literature or to stress its significance for the future of consciousness and man.

Sri Aurobindo wanted poetry to be *mantric* and mystical. As the theorist of poetry, Sri Aurobindo is neither to teach truth nor to pursue knowledge, nor to serve any ethical purpose, but to have a life of its own and to embody beauty and to give delight. His sole intention in writing *Savitri* is to theorize the norms of a poet for future poetry. The future poetry may take any or all forms- the lyric, the drama, the epic, but each form has to run along a new line and fix its own new aim. There are some distinctive notes between the early poetry and the poetry of *Savitri* period. In early poetry, the aesthetic theory was influenced either

by the Victorians or Decadents. *Savitri* is based on the new aesthetic theory of indigenous myth, symbol and images. It brings into being the removal of all kinds of evils from the earth by the divine powers of an individual. Here is one example in the text of *Savitri*.

I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind  
 I am the goal of the travail of the suns:  
 My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.  
 But too immense my danger and my joy  
 Awake not the immeasurable descent,  
 Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;  
 Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight  
 Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.<sup>42</sup>

Again, the poet engrossed deeply in the high objectives of the mystical reflection; this kind of engrossment generates the principles of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary process. The main thing that can move a man to Godhead is his will power. In the evolutionary process of Sri Aurobindo the specific importance of power exists. For example:

Turned from the fruitless motion of the years,  
 Deserting the fierce labour of the worlds,  
 Aloof from beings, lost in the Alone  
 How shall thy mighty spirit brook repose  
 While Death is still unconquered on the earth

And time a field of suffering and pain?  
 Thy soul was born to share the laden force;  
 Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:  
 Accept the difficulty and god like toil  
 For the slow-paced omniscient purpose lie.<sup>43</sup>

The appeal of certain passages is a fact of immediate experience. The action, the plunge into the inner realm and the long debate with Death and Nothingness reflect the aspect of cosmic drama through the operation of the myth of Savitri. The drama unrolls the deeper psychological reality of the innermost regions of human mind. The symbolic content and enrichment are Sri Aurobindo's own creative genius and this too represents the subtle cultural signifiers and signs that deserve to be decoded in order to work out the poetic theory of the poet in relation to our social order. Here is the poetry such as Rishis wrote or might write. Prima facie, the motifs behind the surfacial reading of the poem lie in the quest of higher existence of soul beyond the area of darkness. Strictly according to the norms of his poetic principle/theoretic norms, Sri Aurobindo paints even the super creator with human weaknesses. Following lines in the text bring the fact into being that even the super creator, Savitri too undergoes the temptations of "the never-dying fire" :

And the miracle of the never-dying fire,  
 It spoke to some first inexpressible ecstasy

Hidden in the creative beat of life;  
 Out of the nether unseen deeps it tore  
 Its lure and magic of distorted bliss,  
 Into earth-light poured its maze of tangled charm  
 And heady draught of Nature's primitive joy  
 And fire and mystery of *forbidden delight*  
 Drunk from the world-libido's bottomless well,  
 And the honey sweet poison-wine of lust and death  
 But dreamed a vintage of glory of life's gods,  
 And felt as celestial rapture's golden sting  
 The cycles of the infinity of desire.<sup>44</sup>

The theoretic norms of poetry bring the fact into light that Sri Aurobindo becomes successful in showing a subtle yet inner battle between the light (truthfulness) in the form of Satyavan and the dark forces (Yama) and the final victory comes to the righteousness/truthfulness in his theory of evolution. An allied theme of the poem, on which the entire action hangs, is resurrection, the resurrection of Truth (*Satyavan*), the soul of the world, Telos. Not defiance of the Law, not personal desire, but Grace alone can do the miracle, some descent of the supreme. This exactly is what Savitri, the Eternal Feminine, the World Mother, cast in a new role, represents. Fate can be changed by an unchanging will, the World Mother had assured the aspiring Aswapathy.

The foregoing analysis of views, opinions, the critical principles and the textual analysis of Sri Aurobindo yield some

fructiferous inferences that the poet has to bring into his creation some serious and deeper motifs of life. Even the great mystic poets of the world such as Blake, Wordsworth, Yeats, Whitman, Emerson, Kabir, Tulsi, Jai Shankar Prasad, Mahadevi Verma and others work on the path that shows the high serious purposiveness of poetic creation. Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry deals with the broad outlook that encompasses and includes the philosophic norms of *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*.

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## CHAPTER-III

# **PHILOSOPHICAL REVELATIONS IN HIS POETRY**

## **Philosophical Revelations in his Poetry**

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Poetry as a matter of fact is the medium through which the blissful experience of the poet is transplanted into the mind of the responsive reader. In *Indian Poetics*, the poet enjoys a very high place because of the range of his poetic imagination. It is by this gift of poetic imagination, the poet soars high like the skylark of Shelley and searches the truthful essence of life through the media of his poetry. Even in the aesthetic theory of Sri Aurobindo, a poet is first and foremost, a seer. His alert genius penetrates all directions and he sees through the nature of every object. But mere vision is not enough. The highest poetry, which is the product of such genius, lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects as if they were not familiar.

Sri Aurobindo makes his intention clear when he acknowledges, "I am supposed to be a philosopher, but never studied philosophy-everything I wrote came from Yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration."<sup>1</sup> According to the contents of letter, the art of poetry to Sri Aurobindo is not derivative but inspirative. He does not propound any mystic school to be followed, but he simply works on to share his Yogic experience. He does not stand any cult or doctrine of philosophy. His philosophic vision is a kind of discovery which reveals the

everlasting happiness of man. Sri Aurobindo's poetry can be understood from a *Sahrdaya*, for the purity of mind and cultural evolution are the concepts which are to be measured only when the reader becomes associative with the thought process of the poet.

The word *Sahrdaya* of Indian Poetics needs to be analysed because most of the writings of Sri Aurobindo come near to the philosophy of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*. *Sahrdaya* as a compound word is formed by two words : *sa* and *hrdaya*. *Sa* stands for togetherness while *hrdaya* reveals the internal mechanism of human organs and is totally different from *manas citta* and *akuti* (thinking). It becomes suggestive of believing instead of thinking. The word *hrdaya* is derived from its root "hr" which means to take away, to carry away. It is not the physical heart may reflect through its vibration some of the function of *hrdaya*, it is functionary of supramental activity where mental processes such as intellection, recollection and contemplation are combined together. In the concept of *Sahrdaya*, there comes a complete merger of sensate, supersensate and the highest level of consciousness.

The function of *hrdaya* is that of a crucible in which one's desire, passions, love, hatred and one's understanding of things are put to melt in an intense heat of compulsion to communicate or to receive. A *Sahrdaya* thus requires a keen recollection and an

intense contemplation as a preparation for the melting process, which takes place when there is an aesthetic engagement.<sup>2</sup>

The concept *Sahrdaya* brings the cessation of personal mode of human mind, making one with the perfect unison of the total consciousness of human psyche. Sri Aurobindo also traces the growth of consciousness and Yogic experiences in his poetic philosophy.

The sum and substance of all is that man is growing and has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual but in his collective, that is to say, social life. Infact, the growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, the master key to earthly evolution.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo believes in evolution, for the creation is itself an evolution. With the hope for finding the highest man moves towards it. The early poetry of Sri Aurobindo suggests the efforts of the man to realize the thin threads of human consciousness- Matter, Life and Mind. The real object of the mystic poetry is not to amuse but to inspire. Mystic poetry therefore attempts to express the spirit in terms and rhythms of the flesh and the sensuous objects of human life. The mysticism at its best reveals the interplay between the man and the divine power.

Sri Aurobindo has one unique question to be solved in the contents of *The Future Poetry* :

What is the highest power we demand from poetry;  
or,- let us put it more largely and get nearer the root  
of the matter,- what may be the nature of the poetry,  
its essential law, and how out of that arises the  
possibility of its use as the mantra of the real.<sup>4</sup>

When the poet talks of poetry as "mantra", he certainly refers its contents to the *moksha* or an evolution of the man by the utterance of "mantra". Again, the term mantra reveals the highest function of the poetry. Infact, the etymology of mantra is derived from the sense of "a Vedic hymn or sacred prayer, a sacred text".<sup>5</sup> Sri Aurobindo in his philosophy thinks of reviving the Vedic culture and the Vedic way of life for two things : the future of mankind and the future of poetry.

The stress on *mantra* is meant only for exploring the tenets of truth and its applicability to the values of life. Sri Aurobindo has commented that in the Vedic mantras the ancient Rishis have used a language of symbols which yield one meaning on the surface and quite occult meanings in the depth. Thus, the Veda is a book of esoteric symbols almost of spiritual formulae which marks itself as a collection of ritual poems. The inner sense is psychological, universal and impersonal. To Sri Aurobindo, the secret of Veda lies in 'adhyatmic' and 'tattwic' meanings of the text.

He also reveals an indepth import of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*. These two books have influenced him for his philosophic shape. He regards the Upanishads as the soul of Vedas. In his monumental work, *The Secret of Veda*, Sri Aurobindo has explained the deeper influence of Vedas on his poetic vision:

The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*drasta*) of an eternal truth and impersonal knowledge. The language of the Veda itself is "sruti", a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Poetry serves the purpose of relishing the aesthetic motifs of life. But it is not the sole element and aesthesis too is not confined to a reception of poetry and art; it extends to everything in the world. In art the beauty becomes the main concern, but in the aesthetic of Sri Aurobindo, it has the wider range of human emotions. He regards the poetry as Ananda through the ladders of beauty. Man's seeking after beauty reaches its most intense and satisfying expression in the great creative arts. The poetic range can not be excluded from any sphere of human life. The seeking for beauty is not rational, it springs from the roots of our life. It is

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an instinct and impulse of aesthetic creation and enjoyment. Thus, poetry aims at the richest harmony of five eternal powers- Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. Among these powers of poetry Beauty and Delight are considered to be the most important components.

Delight is the soul of existence, beauty the intense impression, the concentrated form of delight. For the artist the two are identified and for the poet the moon of beauty and delight is a greater godhead even than the sun of truth or the breath of life.<sup>7</sup>

Sri Aurobindo as a Yogi describes the canons of spiritual beauty in his philosophic vision even in the composition of his early poems. In his youthful poems, *Songs to Myrtilla*, one sees the young poet's reaction to the beauty and its concept. There one finds a lyrical reaction to the beauties of Nature and the grace and charm of human feelings therein. Here one finds the Keatsean sense of beauty:

Many a girl's lips ruby-red  
 With their vernal honey fed  
 Happy mouths, and soft cheeks flushed  
 Ruddy lips of many a boy  
 Blithe discovered hills of joy  
 Ruby- guided through a kiss  
 To the sweet highways of bliss.<sup>8</sup>



The images, "ruby-red" lips in case of a girl and "ruddy-lips" in case of young boy, lead to a kiss and finally "to the sweet highways of bliss". Physical beauty remains always for an evolution- a growth that makes the two for the realization of the highest purpose of life. The philosophic vision of Sri Aurobindo brings even the passionate approach between the lover and the beloved. He sings of passionate adoration of the charms of the beloved:

Lips, the honey combs of pleasure,  
Cheeks enrozed, Love's natal soil,  
Breasts, the ardent conqueror's spoil.<sup>9</sup>

The early poems of Sri Aurobindo include the composition of *Urvasie* and *Love and Death*. These are the poems which deal with the deathless romance and the subject of love and beauty. The charges that Sri Aurobindo's poetry include lies in the objection that his poetry reveals only the philosophic, vision of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The answer of it can be seen in the composition of *Urvasie*. In portraying the immortal nymph, *Urvasie*, Sri Aurobindo captures the higher vital principle of love, beauty and passion. This celestial beauty is a revel of ethereal enchantment. One sees the marvellous description of *Urvasie* in the following lines :

Perfect she lay amid her tresses wide,  
 Like a mishandled lily luminous,  
 As she had fallen.....  
 A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined  
 Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face  
 Was a fallen moon among the snows  
 And king Pururavus, beholding, glowed  
 Through all his limbs and maddened with a love  
 He feared and cherished.....  
 And soon she moved. Those wonderful wide orbs  
 Downed into his, quietly as if in muse  
 A lovely slow surprise crept into them  
 Afterwards; last, something far lovelier,  
 Which was herself, and was delight, and love.<sup>10</sup>

There one finds the skilful association of the three aspects of aesthetic beauty : grace, subtle beauty and its outward expression. Sri Aurobindo has combined in Urvashi the celestial beauty of the heavenly nymph and the intensity of the eternal lover. She is both heavenly and divine, yet she never misses the earthly and physical attraction. In the hands of Sri Aurobindo. In another poem, '*Love and Death*', Sri Aurobindo reveals the richness and the sensuousness of the youthful vitality. In Priyamvada, one finds a deeper love for the earth. She becomes symbolic of oneness with physical nature and the lyrical human beauty. Her nature answers to

the elemental beauty. The following lines of the poem bring into being the passionate utterance and the physical charm of Priyamvada :

...And I had had so little  
 Of joy and the wild day and throbbing night, Laughter,  
 and tenderness, and strife and tears,  
 I have not numbered half the brilliant birds  
 In one green forest, nor am familiar grown  
 With sunrise and the progress of the eves,.....  
 I have not learned the names of half the flowers  
 Around me; so few trees know me by my name;  
 Nor have I seen the stars so very often  
 That I should die.<sup>11</sup>

Both the poems exemplified above yield the fructiferous sublimation of emotions and sentiments. One sees the essentialities of the triple force- beauty, love and delight. These poems are vibrant with the ideation of the spiritual and the physical aesthetics of the poetry. Again, the face of Urvashi

Was secret in its own divinity  
 Like a high sun of splendour Paradise.  
 Breathed from her limbs.<sup>12</sup>

In the theme of love and death, Sri Aurobindo turns again and again for the inspiration of *Savitri*, his *magnum opus*. Wherever

death is referred to or is the central theme, Sri Aurobindo answers the problem in diverse ways fitting it into the context and situation. Death begets the clash of powers. In *Urvasie*, death has been regarded as the liberator and reconciler; it finally unites the two extraordinary beings. *Love and Death*, a poem with an epic touch demonstrates the supremacy of love over death. Thus, this *Love and Death* becomes a prelude to *Savitri* where in one is informed about the tedious journey of *Savitri*. Death, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not merely disintegration of the body, it is the death that brings into being the integration of life.

With the descent of superamental consciousness death can be conquered. In his poetry, we find two approaches : the spirit which challenges death, and the spirit of challenge and transcendence. He does not recognize the omnipotence of death. He is of the view that man can conquer the forces of death. Following the echoing sense of the *Bhagavadgita*, Sri Aurobindo acknowledges in *Fear of Death* :

Death is but changing of our robes to wait

In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.<sup>13</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his philosophical vision thinks of the Death frequently. It is in *Savitri* that we find the greatest and fullest treatment of Death. Savitri faces the challenge of Death. She prepares herself for the great ordeal which the Death demands

from her. The '*Debate of Love and Death*' in *Savitri* shows the inner struggle of Savitri for saving the life of Satyavan. Death reveals all its magnitude and pussiance, the world of double twilight to strike Savitri dumb with terror. He says :

O dark ironic critic of God's Work,  
 Thou mockst the mind and body's faltering search  
 For what the heart holds in a prophet hour  
 And the immortal spirit shall make its own  
 Mine is a heart that worshipped, though forsaken  
 The image of the god its love adored;  
 I have burned in flame to travel in his steps  
 Are we not they who bore vast solitude  
 Seated upon the hills alone with God?  
 Why dost thou vainly strive with me, O Death,  
 A mind delivered from all twilight thoughts,  
 To whom the secrets of the gods are plain?  
 For now at last I know beyond all doubt  
 The great stars burn with my unceasing fire.  
 And life and death are both its fuel made  
 Life only was my blind attempt to love;  
 Earth saw my struggle, heaven my victory.<sup>14</sup>

She wins over the black force of the death; she makes the Earth and the Heaven as the witnesses for her victory. Even the stars are not in the position to see and to feel burning fire of

Savitri. Death she believes to be the mask that has covered the Eternal's face. She says :

Yet for joy and for sorrow earth was made  
 And not as a dream in endless sufering Time  
 Although God made the world for his delight,  
 An ignorant power took charge and seemed his Will  
 And death's deep falsity has mastered life.<sup>15</sup>

The only power that can conquer the vast ignorance and Death is the power of love. It is this love that makes Savitri stand like a rock before the invincible power of death :

The heart that loved man thrills to the love of God.  
 A body is his chamber and his shrine  
 Then is our being rescued from separateness;  
 All is itself, all is new feel in God;  
 A lover leaning from his cloister's door  
 Gathers the whole world into his single breast  
 Then shall the business fail of Night and Dark:  
 When unity is won, when strife is lost  
 And all is known and all is clasped by Love  
 Who would turn back to ignorance and pain.<sup>16</sup>

Now, it will be appropriate to analyse the mantric power spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Sri Aurobindo applies the theory of *mantra* in his poetic vision. Sri Aurobindo himself talks of the power of mantra in *The Future Poetry* :

What the Vedic poets meant by the *mantra* was an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking attended by a realization, to use the ponderous but necessary modern word, of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed.... But poetry is the *mantra* only when it is the voice of the inmost truth and is couched in the highest power of the very rhythm and speech of that truth. And the ancient poets of Veda and Upanishads claimed to be writing the *mantra* because always it was this inmost and almost occult truth of things which they strove to see and hear and speak and because they believed themselves to be using or finding its innate soul rhythm and the sacrificial speech of it cast up by the divine Agni, the sacred Fire in the heart of man. The *mantra*, in other words, is a direct and most hightened, and interest and most divinely burdened rhythmic word which embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and the presence of very self, the inmost reality of things and with its truth and with the divine soul-forms, the Godheads which are born from the living truth. Or,

Ashtakard  
constructa

let us say, it is the supreme rhythmic language which seizes hold upon all that is finite and brings into each the light and voice of its own infinite.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Aurobindo follows the principles of Indian Poetics, and more especially the vision of Sanskrit Poetics in his mantric poetry. Indian Aesthetics regards the literary excellence, the diction, the poetic figure-all these as essential elements in poetry. But it hardly assigns to any one the dominant place in literature. Rasa, as it reaffirms, constitutes, the centre of gravity for poetic art. Sahitya is union or coming together of two things :

When *Sabda* and *Artha* or the signifier and the signified come together, we get speech. But this relationship between the signifier and the signified alone does not constitute poetry. For the *vachakavakya* relationship characterizes ordinary, non-poetic expression also; and it is bound by *padavakya pramana*-logic and denotation-characteristic of non-poetic discourse.<sup>18</sup>

All possible arguments and counter arguments have been analysed and will be analysed for brining into being the aesthetics of *Rasa*, *Alankara* (figure of speech), *Dhvani* (suggestion), *Guna* (excellences), *Dosha* (faults) while analysing the poetic vision of Sri Aurobindo. Mostly Sanskrit literary critics belong to the concept of Kavi (the maker) and regards the poet as "seer". Sri



Aurobindo looks upon the poetry with the same vision and outlook as it was regarded in the times of Vedas.

Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that "the true creator of poetry, as also its true hearer, is the soul. "It is the duty of the poet that he should write the matric poetry in such a way as it should become easily comprehensible to *Sahrdaya* (the responsive reader). To Sri Aurobindo, *mantra* can never be the creation of human mind, it is, infact, the product of the total consciousness that emanates from the poetic imagination. The vision of , poetry lies in the Overmind inspiration :

Its characteristics are a language that says infinitely more than the mere sense of the words seem to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the infinite and disappears into the Infinite and the power to convey not merely some mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing it speaks of, but its value and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness, which is behind them all.<sup>20</sup>

The poetry deals with the mystery of life and beyond life prospects. In the series of *mantric* vision of poetry, Sri Aurobindo deals with the theme of liberation.

The theme of liberation links together *Urvasie*, *Love*

*and Death, Savitri* and a number of his philosophical lyrics. Sri Aurobindo has adopted before himself the mission of liberating mankind out of ignorance. The process of liberation can be had through the process of evolution. The ultimate aim of his philosophy and Yoga is the liberation of the spirit from the bondage of matter. Sri Aurobindo hardly talks of the personal liberation leaving the collective entities aside; he always talks of the liberation of all equally. The idea of individual felicity was distasteful to the poet, he always awakens the sense for the evolution of mankind. Sri Aurobindo says about his Yoga, "The Yoga we pratise is not for ourselves alone, but for humanity. Its object is not personal mukti but the liberation of the human race."<sup>21</sup> His ideas and vision of yoga is not individual but they are meant for the entire humanity. He attains Nirvana which he acknowledges in his letter :

Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realization, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale. It came unasked, unsought for, though quite welcome. I had no least idea about it before, no aspiration towards it, infact, my aspiration was towards just the opposite, spiritual power to help the world and to do my work in it.<sup>22</sup>

In Savitri too one gets the reflections of such ideas :

Ous lives are God's messenger beneath the stars;  
 To dwell under death's shadow they have come  
 Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race  
 His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,  
 His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.<sup>23</sup>

Sri Aurobindo establishes the secular approach of *dharma* in his philosophic vision of *Savitri*. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo deals with the gradual development of the evolution of human mind through the text of *Savitri*. As a pioneer of Indian Revolution and as an advocate of *swadeshi movement*, he was an original thinker and his originality can easily be seen in the writings of *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. Indeed, the originality of *Savitri* so prevails as it has been regarded as "the crest-jewel of Indian Poetry in English."<sup>24</sup> I.A. Richards has also remarked about the excellences of the composition of poetry : "The very greatness of a poem can stupefy the reader."<sup>25</sup>

Sri Aurobindo himself remarks about the aesthesis of poetry, which can be an application to the poetic vision of the poet himself :

Aesthesis therefore is of the very essence of poetry,  
 as it is of all art. But it is not the sole element and  
 aesthesis too is not confined to a reception of

poetry and art; it extends to everything in the world : there is nothing we can sense, think or in any way experience to which there can not be an aesthetic reaction of our conscious being..... It is the universal Ananda that is the parent of a aesthesis and the universal Ananda takes three major and original forms-beauty, love and delight, the delight of all existence, the delight in things, in all things.<sup>26</sup>

The entire philosophic contents of *Savitri* can be analysed in the three major philosophic constituents : love, beauty and delight. Of course, the delight can be personified with the concept of Ananda of *Satchitananda*. The derivation of *Savitri* is from the ancient *Upakhyana* in Sanskrit. Sri Aurobindo also explores the fundamental psychological traits of human personality. After the narrative poems of the early Baroda period, with the turn of century, Sri Aurobindo engages himself fully in Yogic experiences. He reveals his aptitude for the motifs of epical writings. He thought that the philosophy of Overhead and the philosophy of universal consciousness can in the better way be realised through the composition of epical motifs. Sri Aurobindo himself makes his motifs clear about the philosophic vision of *Savitri* :

Satyavan is soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the divine Word, daughter

of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapathy, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that help us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the shining Hosts, father of Satyavan is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory.<sup>27</sup>

With these human Characters, Sri Aurobindo has revealed the triple forces of the cosmos in his Savitri. This then becomes "a self-contained epic within the larger epic frame of *Savitri*, a poetic encyclopaedia of occult knowledge and experience."<sup>28</sup> Aswapathy's sadhana becomes a prelude to the sadhana of Savitri. The sun heights of knowledge and achievements are real as hell-dark cynicism and self-indulgence. Savitri presents a wonderful example of the mystic and the spiritual poetry. *The Symbol Dawn* in Canto I is related to the Vedic goddess Dawn (Usha). This symbolically becomes <sup>tautology</sup> symbolic of the continuity of time. The Time finally shows a contrast with the Timeless process:

Like giant figures wrestling in the night :

The godheads from the dim Inconscient born

Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,

And in the shadow of her flaming heart,

At the sombre centre of the dire debate,  
 A guardian of the unconsolated abyss  
 Inheriting the long agony of the globe,  
 A stone-still figure of high and god like pain  
 Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes  
 That saw griefs timeless depths but not life's goal  
 Afflicted by his harsh divinity  
 Bound to his throne, he waited unappeared  
 The daily oblation of her unwept tears.<sup>29</sup>

With book IV, the reader witnesses the terrestrial drama in which the fulfilment for the demand of the king is melted out. Next, the meeting of Savitri with Satyavan in Book V becomes the suggestive of earthly vision-a vision that unites Savitri with Satyavan. The book is important in the sense that encourages Savitri to understand the interior journey of human mind and she attains thus a status of a realized soul who fights in saving the life of Satyavan, the truthfulness. Sri Aurobindo reveals the mystic approach which includes the aesthetic consciousness of high mental force. The triyatra of Savitri includes the Yogic consciousness that becomes an inspirative motif of common reader about the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo :

An inner voice could speak the unreal's Word :  
 Its puissance dangerous and absolute  
 Could mingle poison with the wine of God

On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;  
 Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms  
 Gliding down stream in a blithe gilded barge :  
 She edged her ray with a magnificent lie  
 Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;  
 Truth stares and does her work with bandaged eyes  
 And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here.<sup>30</sup>

Thus Savitri as a sadhaka performs tapasya; a hard  
 core penances which generate in her a will that hardly bends amidst  
 all contraries. Fasting and physical endurance are but the outward  
 signs of a profound inner quest. There comes incessantly the inner  
 struggles; and Savitri wins over these struggles through knowledge  
 and tapasya. Savitri's exploration of the hidden consciousness and  
 her apocalyptic vision have their sources in *Vedas* and  
*Upanishads*. Even the realization of the Mother contribute Sri  
 Aurobindo to his philosophical reflections. Intimation of  
 occidental philosophies are gathered with the purpose that one  
 should measure really the importance of the occult and the inner  
 life of the spiritual :

As long as the individual does not wake up to his  
 true self which is seraphically free from the taint of  
 limitation and separativity, the pressure of the  
 egoistic personality gives him a false and precarious  
 sense of stability and security. On the one hand,

behind the desire-soul or the ego, there is another force, the psychic entity, who is the delegate from the divine, gains increasing control over body, vital and mind, tempers and transmutes their marred nature, progressively divinises these instruments till at last the ego withers and disappears, and the true self-like the Sun emerging out of a cluster of clouds-shines in all its native glory and power of purposive action."<sup>31</sup>

Savitri removes all the particles of lower impulses. She becomes a *Yogin* in order to overcome the grief of the ordeal, which she meets in extending her love to Satyavan. Savitri looks forward, and lurks inward wherein she sees the vastness of her soul. She tears up the veils of ignorance and rejects the coloured reflections which are the result of her ingrained sorrows. She becomes altogether "a transformed being". She finds a power within her. She obeys her inner command by which she cops up even the difficult situation easily. Like Aswapathy, she also undertakes a long spiritual journey to vast variegated realms, and their experiences alike. If Aswapathy is Aspiration, Savitri is both the Response and the resulting Transformation. Sri Aurobindo sees in her an awakened soul. She awakens "a flaming serpent"<sup>32</sup> which was "released from sleep". Both the sleeping and the rising of the serpent become symobolic of the awakening of the *Kundalini*.



The serpent as an awakened soul touches her centres "with its flaming mouth/ as if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep."<sup>33</sup> Savitri in the realization of "the unseen depths" safeguards the truth from the darkness. As a realized soul she cries out without any hesitation about the success of her Yogic consciousness:

O Soul, my soul, we have created Heaven  
 Within we have found the kingdom here of God  
 His fortress built in a loud ignorant world  
 Our life is entrenched between two rivers of Light,  
 We have turned space into a gulf of peace  
 And made the body a capital of bliss  
 What more, what more, if more still be done?  
 In the slow process of the evolving spirit,  
 In the brief stade between a death and birth  
 A first perfection's stage is reached at last;

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One man's perfection still can save the world  
 There is won a new proximity to the Skies  
 A first betrothal of the Earth to Heaven,  
 A deep concordat between Truth and Life  
 A camp of God is pitched in human time.<sup>34</sup>

At the instance of Indian Poetics, Sri Aurobindo regards the *Kavi*, a creator and the seer of many mysteries of life

and life after. Vision is actually the inner sight which the poet opens in us and this "inner sight must have been intense in him, before he can awaken it in us."<sup>35</sup> Sri Aurobindo considers poetry to be a great formative and illuminative power and the psychological instrument of this power is defined by the phrase "inner sense and the sense." The perceiving, feeling and understanding the consciousness of the poet comes to an active point. It gives an effective focus for the process of sight. This vision of the poet includes the sight of man and Nature, for the man and Nature both have the interpretative power. Thus, the poet comes to the highest vision of human life. The realized soul even challenges the power of Death. The perfect vision thus wins over Death and Time through the process of Timelessness.

Live, Death, awhile, be still my instrutnent  
 One day man too shall know thy fathomless heart  
 Of silence and the brooding peace of Night  
 And grave obedience to eternal law  
 And the calm inflexible pity in thy gaze  
 But now, O, timeless Mightiness, stand aside  
 And leave the path of my incarnate Force  
 Relieve the radiant God from thy black mask  
 Release the soul of the world called Satyavan  
 Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance  
 That he may stand master of life and fate  
 And as imagination

Man's representative in the house of God  
 The mate of wisdom and the spouse of Light  
 The eternal bridegroom of the eternal bride.<sup>36</sup>

The poet not only announces the fundamental of truth, but he also reveals the discrimination between the truth and falsehood. At the instance of a philosopher, the poet establishes the relationship between the man and his intellection. Sri Aurobindo "shows us Truth in its power of beauty, in its symbol or image or reveals it to us in the workings of Nature or in the working of life, and when he has done that, his whole work is done."<sup>37</sup> Therefore Sri Aurobindo thinks it well to insist that "the native power of poetry is in its sight, not in its intellectual thought-matter, and its safety is in adhering to this native principle of vision."<sup>38</sup> And the poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophic view of it, but a "soul - view, a seizing by the inner sense."<sup>39</sup>

In the works of each great poet there comes two things simultaneously: the sprouting of the vision and its communication to *Sahrdaya* (responsive reader). Shakespeare also speaks of the range of poetic imagination and in this way he also brings into being the inner world of the poet's vision:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth from earth to heaven  
 And as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name.<sup>40</sup>

Inner seeing or vision is different from outward seeing, even the most objective vision begins from the subjective one. In the process of creation, the poet "really creates out of himself and not out of what he sees outwardly; that outward seeing only serves to excite the inner vision to its work."<sup>41</sup> The poetic vision of Sri Aurobindo reveals the process of evolution. This is the evolution that emanates from human love. Generally, it happens that a God-realized leaves the affairs of the world, but in *Savitri*, one finds that Savitri returns back as a realized soul to the earth. This she does to show the power of love.

Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that there lies the specific range of the discrimination in the world of the poet for creating a world of his own, for showing the human love with the powers of divinity and for revealing Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of the heaven and the earth:

Human she was once more, earth's Savitri  
 Yet felt in her illimitable change  
 A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth  
 A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven;  
 Light too intense for thought and love too boundless  
 For earth's emotions lit her skies of mind

And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul,  
 All that is sacred in the world drew near  
 To her divine passivity of mood  
 A marvellous voice of silence breathed its thoughts  
 All things in Time and Space she had for hers.<sup>42</sup>

Sri Aurobindo travels into the inner regions of human psyche in his philosophic vision. He derives the inspiration for his poetic vision from his own Yogic experience and self - realization. Still there are some outward influences which mould his thought process of his creative urge. As he was nurtured in the West, it was natural for him to utilize the raw material of the myth for the composition of his poetry. In the early years at Baroda, Sri Aurobindo develops his acquaintances with the myths and symbols of Sanskrit Literature. This literature has added some new dimensions to his western scholarship. He always retained his fascination for the Greek and Sanskrit myths, symbols and the legends. In the series of various influences on him for the making and re-making of the poet in him, Sri Aurobindo acknowledges the various influences that shaped the form, vision and philosophy of his poetry:

I dare say some influence of most of the great English poets and of others also, not English can be traced in my poetry- I can myself see that of Milton, sometimes of Wordsworth and Arnold; but it was of

the automatic kind- they came in unnoticed. I am not aware of much influence of Shelley and Coleridge, but since I read Shelley a great deal and took an intense pleasure in some of Coleridge's poetry, they may have been there without my knowledge. The one work of Keats that influenced me was *Hyperion*- I dare say my blank verse got something of his stamp through that.<sup>43</sup>

The influences cited above bring at least one fact into being about the leaning aptitude and the inner quality of Sri Aurobindo as a poet. He reveals the inner and the higher range of human consciousness. His vision sees all and feels all as an integral part of his consciousness. And yet all seems a natural process, a spontaneous movement of the process of creativity. There are no fluctuations of inspiration in him, for he has identified himself with the source of inspiration. He never allowed the exteriority to interfere in his interiority of the vision. Visions, descriptions, images come and the silent mind merely transmits a message and gives it a form as an instrument of the spirit. Here are a few lines from Savitri for showing an indelible impression and leaving a never ending message for the evolution of humanity:

By suffering and annihilation's pain  
Pushing the unwillingness to be one,  
Angry with the refusals of the world

Passionate to take but knowing not how to give  
 Death's sombre cowl was cast from Nature brow;  
 Their lightened on her the godhead's lurking laugh  
 All grace and glory and all divinity  
 Were here collected in a single form;  
 All worshipped eyes looked through his one face;  
 He bore all godheads in his grandiose limbs  
 An oceanic spirit dwelt within;  
 Intolerant and invincible in joy  
 A flood of freedom and transcendent bliss  
 Into immortal lines of beauty rose.<sup>44</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his philosophical reflections and mystical revelations has explained at many places the mystic approach to life. For example, the dialogue between Savitri and Yama becomes a wonderful example for the evolutionary process of the poet. In the old legend Savitri's speeches to Yama are a strange and intriguing mixture of naivety and subtlety and even a little ambiguity. Both the protagonists deploy fact and good sense, and Yama pleased with her. He grants her several boons; he finally releases the soul of Satyavan. The sweet and substantial words of Savitri create the sense of transformation in Yama:

The static God of Death is transformed into the dynamic God of Dharma. This would mean that Savitri is more than a woman and wife, and the struggle is not for a single life alone.<sup>45</sup>

The dialogues between Savitri and Yama become the hard core for philosophic vision of Sri Aurobindo. Savitri finally succeeds in relieving the soul of Satyavan. Yama, the God of Death, also acknowledges the superpower of Savitri. He says that the re-awakening of Satyavan is essential for making this earth as the repository of God. Yama assimilates and pours the power of soul in Savitri as he says:

O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,  
 The revealing voice of my immortal Word  
 The face of Truth upon the roads of Time  
 Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God  
 While the dim light from the veiled Spirit's peak  
 Falls upon Matter's stark inconscient sleep  
 As if a pale moon- beam on a dense glade  
 And Mind in a half light moves amid half-truths  
 And the human heart knows only love  
 And life is stumbling and imperfect force  
 And body counts out its precarious days  
 You shall be born into man's dubious hours.<sup>46</sup>

The object of mystic poetry is not only to amuse or entertain but the expression of an inner truth. It also brings the inner ideas and experiences to the common people. The dialogue between Yama and Savitri reveals a deeper fact for two things: Savitri as Yama's "spirit's power" and that she will reveal the



essence of "Immortal Word"- that becomes equivalent to the idea of soul or Aum. The mystic poet has no avowed purpose in whatever he writes and he can also not account critically all his doings. The mystic poet "does not himself deliberately choose or arrange word and rhythm but only sees it as it comes in the very act of inspiration. If there is any purpose of any kind, it also comes by and in the process of inspiration ..... He feels or intuitively and the reader or critic has to do the same."<sup>47</sup>

Mystic poetry therefore attempts to express the spirit in terms and rhythms of the flesh- the earthly and the sensuous. Mysticism lies precisely in the play of the two- human and divine, flesh and soul- a hide and seek between them. Sri Aurobindo has not rejected the worldly life like other saints who keep themselves shut from the operative worldly affairs. He thinks that man can search a better heavenly abode on this earth. This singularity of his philosophy lies in his vision of man's evolution into a new being with greater possibilities opening up in him. He has performed Sadhana only because he wanted to bring the philosophy of supermind on this earth.

The *Upanishads* speak of the realization of Brahmin in various ways. But the core of the discussion of all the *Upanishads* lies in the life of divine consciousness. Sri Aurobindo envisages the spiritualization and the transformation of the worldly life. His ideal lies in the attainment of the divine consciousness. It can only conquer the evils from society. The theme of transformation is one of the major concerns and characteristics of Sri Aurobindo as a

thinker, Yogi and as a poet. In "The Life Heavens", Heaven comes to him, the Earth outcries to limitless sublime:

I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven,  
 My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose joys  
 A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven;  
 My dumbness fills with echos of a far voice.<sup>48</sup>

Sri Aurobindo regards man as not only made in the image of God, but made to manifest God. This human body is a powerful temple of God.

Generally the critics put one question about the philosophic vision of Sri Aurobindo: Is he a poet or Yogi? But the answer of it can easily be given to the reader, for the poetry of Sri Aurobindo is a fine example of "pure poetry"<sup>49</sup> with its concrete poetic philosophy. His thought is profound and his philosophy is evolutionary. His *Savitri* is steeped in Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy. Philosophy and poetry have seldom been fused together in a harmonious pattern. Perhaps Dante did that, and now Sri Aurobindo repeats the feat. *Savitri* is, no doubt, an excellent exposition of Indian philosophy and Sri Aurobindo has made his mark in the literary world with this unique achievement.

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## CHAPTER-IV

# **USE OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS (MYSTIC SPECULATIONS)**

## **Use of Myths and Symbols (Mystic Speculations)**

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Before the application of myth and symbolization (two terms denoting the linguistic properties of any writer), it seems appropriate to analyse the inner motifs of the myth first and then the art of symbolization. The study of ancient myths has called on the attention of the global writers. The decoding of the items of the myth might open new ways of reconstructing culture. Ernest Becker decodes the linguistic properties of the myth in the following words :

Probably for a half-million years mankind has believed that there were two worlds- a visible one in which every day action took place, and a greater, much more powerful world-the invisible one, upon which the visible depended and from which it drew its power.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that myths were created by the oral/written tradition of ancient people's beliefs. The structuralist approach to the myths is mainly concerned with the knowledge of the ancient world. "Even the so called natural epics are nothing but the poetic configurations of the myths- the myths arranged in a poetic order."<sup>2</sup>

Northrop Frye in his essay "Myth, Fiction and Displacement" has tried to trace the origin of some of the magic power of the myth interpretation. He says that the rising movement of the myths of spring and autumn can be found in comedy and tragedy. He also argues that "the structural principles of a mythology built up from analogy and identity, become in due course the structural principles of literature."<sup>3</sup> The human affairs of this world had somehow to be adjusted in such a way that they become "imitations" of the celestial phenomenon. The relation between these two facts is not based on reason, but on faith or on inner urge in the ancient man to draw power from the supernatural being :

By a myth.... I mean primarily a certain type of story. It is a story in which some of the chief characters are gods or other beings larger in power than humanity. Very seldom it is located in history : its action takes place in a world above or prior to ordinary time, *in illotempore*, in Mircea Eliado's phrase. Hence, like the folk tale, it is an abstract story pattern. The characters can do what they like, which means what the story teller likes : there is no need to be plausible or logical in motivation. The things that happen in myth are things that happen only in stories; they are in a self-contained literary world.<sup>4</sup>



If the cultural context has grown unfamiliar, the pattern of the myth works in literature. Indian myths have not lost their cultural relevance and even in the present time their influence is applicable to literary theories. Some scholars are trying to interpret the Vedic “mantras” and Sri Aurobindo stands foremost among them. Infact, with regard to the mantras, their structure is more important than their meaning. In *Rgveda*, Yaksha interprets some of the mythical incidents. Here is an example :

His body lay hidden in the midst of water which neither stops nor stays in one place. Water moved in the private parts (also vulnerable spot) of *Vritra*. *Vritra* who was later killed by Indra lay in profound darkness.<sup>5</sup>

The interpretation of this mantra *Rgveda* by Prof. R.G. Joshi reveals the mythic-symbolist meanings; the meanings that hold the inner validity of mantra even today :

Waters must flow because by nature water cannot stay in one place nor can it stop flowing. Clouds are the body of water. Water finds out the breach in clouds. Then who is *Vritra*? According to *Nairuktikas*, *Vritra* is cloud. When it rains there is water as well as light. This phenomenon is described meta-phorically as a battle. But in the other hymns and in the *Brahmana* texts *Vritra* is

described as serpent. The serpent enlarged its body and prevented water from flowing. When the serpent was killed, water began to flow. This hymn describes that phenomenon.<sup>6</sup>

Through myth the writer works on the process of *sadharnikarana* (transpersonalization) of human emotions. Thus, this way the art of symbolization takes place. The art of symbolization is nothing but the mode of suggestion through the appropriate use of language. The whole doctrine of symbolization is based on the assumption that words are in a position to signify contents other than the normal ones, enabling the comprehender to savour his own moods and passions. That words acquire new dimension of meanings is evident in ordinary employment of language as well where the total experience is conveyed by the sentence conveying a meaning other than the sum total of meanings signified by the words constituting a sentence. The entire meaning relation exists in the conceptual level. The word- concept and the meaning- concept raise into comprehension the significantly striking emotional mood exerting thereby to the appreciator an opportunity of savouring his own self by him. These "considerations prompt the Dhvani-theorists to regard *Rasadhvani* as of paramount importance and to consider attainment of poetic experience as the be - all and end - all specimen of poetic art."<sup>7</sup>

Myth, symbol, legend and history are the different modes of acquiring knowledge. Myth is used for legend and vice-versa. In the prefatory note to his *Perseus the Deliverer*, Sri Aurobindo writes, "the legend of Perseus" which gives an impression that the author calls the myth, a legend for some specific reason. But that is not so. The second paragraph of the note begins with this sentence : "In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of a heroic myth."<sup>8</sup> Thus, for Sri Aurobindo "legend" and "myth" seem to be synonymous and are easily exchangeable. Therefore, the text of Savitri and Urvasie be used as myths for the symbolization of his mystical reflections.

The myth embodies knowledge that is undifferentiated, whole and general. The legend, on the other hand, takes up the particular and translates it into the general terms of the myth. W.B. Yeats in his *explorations* gives a vivid picture of that world which gave births to myths and legends:

Mankind as a whole had a like dream once;  
everybody and nobody built up the dream bit by bit  
and the ancient story-tellers are there to make us  
remember what mankind would have been like, had  
not fear and the failing will and the laws of nature  
tripped up its heels.<sup>9</sup>

Sri Aurobindo freely uses the myths and legends in his poetry. Take for example his early long poem *Urvasie* revealing

the philosophic vision of Urvasie and Pururavus. When Urvasie meets Pururavus there comes a specific energy in their meetings :

....At last he sighed  
 And the vague passion broke from him in speech  
 Heard by the solitude. O thou strong god  
 Who art thou graspest me with *hands of fire*  
 Making my soul all colour? Surely I thought  
 The hills would move and the eternal stars  
 Deviate from their rounds immutable  
 Never Pururavus; yet I fall  
 My soul whirls alien and I hear amazed  
 The galloping of uncontrollable steeds  
 Men said of me. "The king Pururavus"  
 Grow more than man : he lifts to azure heaven  
 In vast equality his spirit sublime.<sup>10</sup>

Urvasie deals with the variant of themes with its mythical approach. It poetises a triumphant struggle against the fate. The fate is negated in this poem. It is a long narrative poem in four cantos and details the well-known king Pururavus.

This poem is the poet's first experiment in the epic form and through the device of myth and legendary figures. The poem has "the racy flow and the impressive sweep of its blank verse".<sup>11</sup> There are some passages which reveal the earthly passion in Urvasie :

He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf.  
 Before a gust among the nearing tress,  
 Cowered - - - - -  
 With a great cry and glad Pururavus  
 Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled  
 Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair  
 Lossened and the wind seized and bore it treaming  
 Over the shoulder of Pururavus  
 And on his cheek a softness. She o'er borne  
 Panting with inarticulate murmurs lay,  
 Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail  
 Her naked arms clasping his cheek, her cheek  
 And golden throat averted, - - - - -  
 Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met  
 With his sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts  
 Tumultuous up against his beating heart,  
 He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire  
 So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.<sup>12</sup>

The poet has made effective use of a number of Homeric similes in it. Canto- I narrates the heroic rescue of Urvashie by Pururavus from the hands of Cayshie, the demon, who was running off with her. This generates the deep suspense in love between the King and Urvashie.

A fine reference to Urvasie's dear companions - Meneca, Mullica, Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie, Lolita, Lavonya and Tilottama has been made. There are brilliant flashes of Nature in it. The king is charged, by the patron- goddess of Aryasthan, of neglecting his duties and "a nation's destinies" for the sake of his own passion. But the mighty mother, to whom the king had been sent by the patron- goddess, tells him that though he has failed in his kingly charge, God will neither blame nor punish him. Pururavus makes a passage to the upper regions and attains an immortal status to be forever united with Urvasie :

And they were left alone in that clear world  
 Then all his soul towards her leaning, took  
 Pururavus into his clasp and felt,  
 Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his  
 Of Urvasie, his love; so pressing back  
 The longed- for sacred face, lingering he kissed  
 Then love in his sweet heavens was satisfied.<sup>13</sup>

*Urvasie* anticipates *Savitri* in many ways. Both deal with the mythic world of Hindu legends. The Mighty Mother in *Urvasie* suggests the World Mother in *Savitri*. Both follow the epic pattern and employ blank verse for spiritual/metaphysical reflections. The poet was deeply influenced by the myth of Urvasie. It has been suggested that Sri Aurobindo considered this theme for his epic of human aspirations before finally adopting the myth of Savitri in a

narrative form.

*Savitri* as the mythic poetry is the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's poetic career. It is based on the myth of Savitri which has been derived from the tale of the *Mahabharata*. This myth or legend became the symbolization in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The poem opens on the day when Satyavan is fated to die according to Narad Muni's prophecy. Among epics which can be compared with it in general poetic quality, only the *Shah Namah*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* exceed it in length. Three works which, like it, are products of the East. And indeed *Savitri* stands with the masterpieces of Valmiki and Vyasa in more than one respect. It has been conceived with something of the ancient Indian temperament which not only rejoiced in massive structures but took all human life and human thought. A cosmic sweep is *Savitri* and Sri Aurobindo wanted his poem to be many sided multi-coloured carving out of the gigantic secrets of his "supramental yoga".<sup>14</sup>

To begin with, the very name Savitri is of the Vedic origin. Etymologically, Savitri means "descended from Savitra". "Savitra" is derived from "Su" which means "to give birth to" or "bring forth". Savitri is the mysterious power of the word, or the mantra. Savitri stands for the dynamic or *Shakti*. Thus, in this "Shakti" aspect "Savitri" stands for the great creative mantra pertaining to the creative and the preservative power of the sun

god. This dynamic power or *Shakti* is known in the Vedas as Gayatri and this Gayatri is held in the highest esteem in all the Vedas and other Hindu religious scriptures like the *Manu Smriti* and the *Puranas*. Sri Aurobindo in his letters reveals his intents so far as the creation of Savitri is concerned :

.....*Savitri* is an experiment in mystic poetry, spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure. Done on this rule, it is really a new attempt and cannot be hampered by old ideas of technique except when they are assimilable. Least of all by a standard proper to a mere intellectual and abstract poetry which makes "reason and taste" the supreme arbiters, aims at a harmonized poetic intellectual balanced expression of the sense, elegance in language, a sober and subtle use of imaginative decoration, a restrained emotive elements etc. The attempt at mystic spiritual poetry of the kind I am at demands above all a spiritual objectivity, an intense psychophysical concreteness.<sup>15</sup>

Describing the attunement of a sage the *Gita* brings the fact in to light in the 69 verse of the second chapter, "The man who is a controller of his self keeps awake in that which is night to all others and he regards as Night which is Day to others." In *Savitri*, the mind and thinking of Ashwapathy undergoes a change as a result



of his tapasya. His discrimination and the eye of wisdom is awakened. His awakening to the inner light in him is, after the manner of the Gita tells about the cyclicity of time in form of day and night. The very beginning of Savitri shows this point in detail :

It was the hour before the Gods awake  
 Across the path of the divine Event  
 The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone  
 In her unlit temple of eternity,  
 Lay stretched immobile upon Silence's marge  
 Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable  
 In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse  
 The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;  
 A fathomless zero occupied the world.  
 A power of fallen boundless self awake  
 Between the first and the last Nothingness,  
 Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,  
 Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth  
 And the tardy process of mortality.<sup>16</sup>

The example shows a deeper relationship for spiritual relationship among the *Gita*, *Upanishads*, *Vedas* and *Savitri*. In the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the vision of spiritual reflections are dealt with perfect accuracy. They hold promise of a new universe of spiritual and mystical reflections. They are the experiences which humanity has been aspiring to possess since

time immemorial. What was only hinted in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* or was present in them in a seed form (*vijarupa*), has been developed and treated in some details in *Savitri*. Purani brings forth the revelative force of *Savitri* in the following lines :

Savitri is like a vast band of lightening steadied into the poetic empyrean, illuminating the cosmos from end to Nescience to the highest heights of the *Transcendent Divine*, revealing the double ladder of divine dynamics, the ladder of Descent of the Divine and the ladder of ascent of the human soul. It points to a culmination in the descent of the Divine into the Earth Consciousness and the consequent transformation of the earth-nature into the divine nature.<sup>17</sup>

The ranges of mystic and spiritual existence which even the most developed intellect and powerful intuition fail to perceive and about whose existence one gets only mysterious hints in the *Vedas*. In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has created *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* poetry in English. It is not only influenced by the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* but has also become one like them. Apart from the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, *Savitri's* relationship with other prominent scriptures like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* has also to be studied. Sri Aurobindo once remarked that *Savitri* was planned like the *Ramayana* on a small scale. He said,

“Ramayana has epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in detail.”<sup>18</sup> The Ramayana is charged with the feeling of ideas and the emotions of things. It has ideal delicacy and sustained strength. It portrays ideal manhood and a divine beauty of virtue and ethical order, a civilization founded on Dharma, the ideal law of conduct.

The mythic qualities among the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and *Savitri* can also be accomplished comparatively. The fight between the forces of good and evil may be regarded as a common factor between *Savitri* and the *Ramayana* on the one hand and between *Savitri* and the *Mahabharata*, on the other. The legend of Savitri is no doubt taken from the *Mahabharata* but this has been expanded and transformed and symbolized in such a manner that an influence of the *Mahabharata* on Savitri can not be claimed. In Ramayana, Dharma, the ideal law of life as formulated by the seers- the knowers of Dharma and Rama, the embodiment and upholder of this ideal standard, occupy a position of utmost supremacy. In Savitri, it is not the ideal of human behaviour in man's normal day today affairs of life that occupies the pride of place. It is the divine power working within the creation and the created beings that gets paramount importance.

*Savitri* offers a whole world of experience but it is a world-different of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In

*Savitri*, the life of man and his whole concept of the cosmos undergoes a radical change. *Savitri* does not depict a vision of the world according to the current laws of human behaviour and ideals. It deals with the suprarational making it a natural part of the coming man and regarding it as a legitimate capacity to be attained by him. Sri Aurobindo in his reply to somebody else for the form and details in *Savitri* and why he has chosen this long narrative *Savitri* replies in his letters :

It has been planned not on the scale of *Lycidas* or *Comus* or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor *Ramayana*; it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of the world-vision or world- interpretation. One artistic method is to select a limited subject and even on that to say only what is indispensable, what is centrally suggestive and leave the rest to the imagination or understanding of the reader. Another method which I hold to be equally artistic or, if you like architectural is to give a large and a vast, a complete interpretation, omitting nothing that is necessary, fundamental to the completeness; that is the method I have chosen in *Savitri*.<sup>19</sup>

The poetry in *Savitri* is charged with the power of truth and the mystical reflections. It is the truth of the universal life-beat of a living impulse that is constantly pressing itself for manifestation. And this explication of the universal truth has not been at the cost of the charms that are the natural treasure of all good poetry. Aurobindo finally chooses a secluded life. He, however, keeps himself well-informed from the happenings that took place during the composition of *Savitri*.

The poetic vision of Sri Aurobindo and the poetic vision in *Savitri* is rich with modern elements as natural and organic parts of the poetry. This is because *Savitri* does not renounce the earth; the earth as myth makes the creative process in *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo's poetry has highlighted the necessity of transforming the earth life in order to "create" God on earth. Even the second world-war phase finds a place. The line behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears, reminds us of Churchill's famous speeches. Sri Aurobindo maintains the sublime quality in his *Savitri*.

Apart from the longer poems, Sri Aurobindo expresses the mystical reflections even in his short poems. In the short poems, he deals with the new world of insight and experience; he also deals with the unknown or partially known mode of being. Here is a very short poem "*Nirvana*" which states the points of specific cognition in the very simple words. The

poem becomes the part of mythical tradition. The language of wisdom can be felt in the following lines of this poem :

All is abolished but the mute alone  
 The mind from thought released, the heart from grief  
 Grow in existent now beyond belief;  
 There is no I, no nature, known- unknown  
 The city, a shadow picture without tone  
 Floats, quivers unreal ; forms without relief  
 Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef  
 Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done

- - - - -  
 Only the illimitable Permanent  
 Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still  
 Replaces all-what once was I, in it.  
 A silent unnamed emptiness content  
 Either to fade in the unknowable  
 Or thrill with the luminous seas of the infinite.<sup>20</sup>

Here is what he has elsewhere called the poetry of "open realization". This and other poems are beautiful in the sense in which Santayana described beauty as a contemplation of the essential. We may call it pure poetry with a difference. This is the poetry which borns out of superior organization of consciousness. That is also the poetry of the purification of language. This is the new creation, arising out of "Trance", a tender epiphany :

My mind is awake in a stirless trance,  
 Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;  
 Dispelled is the senses' flicker dance,  
 Mute the body aureate with light  
 O Star of creation, pure and free  
 Halo- moon of ecstasy unknown,  
 Storm - breath of the soul-change yet to be,  
 Ocean self enraptured and alone.<sup>21</sup>

However, these short poems bring a *sphota* that becomes a life-nurturing force in the form of *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo's poetry includes in the form of mantra the traits of Indian Poetics such as *Rasa*, *Alankara*, *Dhvani*, *Guna* (excellence) and *Dosa* (faults) etc. It deals with the mystical reflections of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The Indian Poetics regards the poet as *drista* (seer) who "saw and found the inspired word of his vision" or even bothered to explore the possibility of that kind of poetry which "embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and presence of the very self". Sri Aurobindo, however, regards vision and outlook as it was regarded in the Vedic times. The fact is that the mantra can never be a product of the human mind, however, great and brilliant; nor is it accessible even to the highest poetic imagination. Sri Aurobindo defines the mantric poetry thus :

"The ultimate result of mantric expenditure is the discovery

As what comes from the Overmind inspiration. Its characteristics are a language that says infinitely more than the mere sense of the words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means ever more than the language and is born out of infinite and the power to convey not merely some mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing it speaks of, but its value and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness, which is behind them all.<sup>22</sup>

Savitri is essentially spiritual and mystical. On the contrary, it is concerned with the realization "of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed".<sup>23</sup> The starting point may be, therefore, anything which belongs either to the outer or the inner or any supraphysical, transcendental world. But the "one thing needful is that he should be able to go beyond the word or image he uses or the form of the thing he sees, not be limited by them, but gets into the light of that which they have the power to reveal and flood them with it until they overflow with its suggestion or seem even to lose themselves and disappear into revelation."<sup>24</sup> The poet of *mantra* must be able to penetrate the very soul of the thing or image or word. He should reveal "inmost reality of things". The ultimate result of mantric experience is the discovery



of the highest word. And the discovery of such word is not something or imaginative but an actual seeing of it. Sri Aurobindo discovers such words not in the straight manner, but he uses them metaphorically and symbolically. The poetry of Sri Aurobindo should be analysed on the ladders of suggestion and symbolization. Before making an application of symbolical myths, legends, metaphors and words, it seems appropriate to analyse the inner properties of the word symbol itself.

Symbols have been used by poets since time immemorial. They help the poet in conveying his experience to the readers. All great poetry (ancient and modern) lies embellished with symbols. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* are entirely symbolic. For example, the myth of Pururavus and Urvasie has been derived from the *Rgveda* and Sri Aurobindo has used this myth for symbolical presentation; and it finally symbolizes the creation of Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus*, *Savitri*. The myth of *Urvasie* can be read for the purpose of symbolic presentation in the following words:

Urvasie was an Apsara or a water-born nymph who belonged to the Gandharvas, a clan minstrels. Pururavus was a man, the son of Ila who was the daughter of Manu. Urvasie was banished from the region of the sky and the cause of her banishment is not known. She was beautiful "like a flash of

lightning” and also, “difficult to capture like the wind.” Both of them fell in love with each other and she consented to marry him on two conditions : “thrice a day shalt thou embrace me, but do not lie with me against my will.” In addition to this, she asked him to take care of her two pet rams which were tied to their cot. Another condition was that she should never see him in undress. The Gandharvas who wanted her to come back, stole one of the rams and Urvashie raised hue and cry. Next day when the other ram was also stolen, suddenly Pururavus got up from his bed and in a hurry to rescue the ram, he forgot to put on his garments. At that moment, the Gandharvas produced a flash of lighting which revealed the naked body of Pururavus. Seeing him in that conditions Urvashie instantly vanished. Pururavus who tried to keep up the condition of protecting rams had to break another condition of not showing himself naked. Thus both the conditions were broken by Pururavus, though it was by the contrivance of the Gandharvas. Pururavus, in utter dejection, wandered all over Kurukshetra. There was a lake called *Anyatahplaxa* where the nymphs used to come in the form of

swans. One of the swans was Urvasie and she recognized him. Then followed the dialogue between them which is presented in the *Rgveda*.<sup>25</sup>

The symbolic meaning of the story brings the fact about the nature of woman. As in the beginning of the story, we are told that Urvasie is difficult to capture like the wind and Pururavus can not possess her against her will. Urvasie's refusal is clear and unequivocal : "with women there can be no lasting friendship; hearts of hyenas are the hearts of women."<sup>26</sup> The meaning of the Vedic myth is complex and is further complicated by the details added by the *Satapatha Brahmana*. They are symbolic in their meaning. While decoding the myth it is always safe to start with the personal names. The name "Pururavus" according to *Nirukta* means "one who howls and cries."<sup>27</sup> In one sense, he symbolizes a cloud which rumbles and roars : "roaring he rises and pours water through the holes."<sup>28</sup> In another sense, he represents the yearning of the vital spirit-"Prana". If Urvasie is like a flash of lightning, it is in the fitness of things that Pururavus should be like a cloud. Both the interpretations suggest the trouble and restlessness in the psyches.

The name, Urvasie, has been interpreted by the *Nirukta* in three ways : (1) "burning desire", (2) "one who approaches through her thighs" and, (3) "one whose reputation is great."<sup>29</sup> The first two approaches denote erotic sense in Urvasie.

The union and separation of Pururavus and Urvasie “seems to symbolize tensions and frictions in the process of the narcissistic impulse, developing into a hetero- sexual desire.”<sup>30</sup> The masculine and feminine are two opposite principles of a single personality, the possessive and full of desire, the other tempting, but difficult to capture. Sri Aurobindo chooses the myth of Urvasie Just to show the process of creation on the purity of human relationship.

The distinction between the divine and the human being, between the immortals and the mortals had been suggested in the myth through many devices. Urvasie lived with Pururavus for four autumns but did not eat the gross food that the human beings relish, "she lived on a drop clarified butter, and she neither felt hunger nor thirst." <sup>31</sup> Sri Aurobindo portraits the sensuousness and the character of Urvasie thus :

The apsaras of heaven, daughters of the sea,

Unlimited in being, Ocean like

They not one Lord yield nor in one face

Limit the Universe, but like sweet air,

Water unowned and beautiful common light

In unrestrained surrender remain pure

In patient paths of Nature upon earth

And over all the toiling stars we fill

With *sacred passion* large high-venturing spirits

And visit them with bliss; so are they moved

To immense creative anguish, glad if through  
 Heart- breaking toil once in bare seasons dawn  
 Our golden breasts between their hands or rush  
 Our passionate presence on them like a wave.

But in the myth Urvashie the nakedness of Pururavus presents another problem. It was one of the conditions of their marriage. As long as Pururavus kept his word Urvashie lived with him as his wife. Once it was broken she disappeared.

In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has made an expert and subtle use of symbolism. His aim in the narrative of Savitri is to present a way and the goal of spiritual evolution through the medium of the main adventure in the story. Secondly, he also aimed at imparting a symbolic character. He has indicated his intention in the wording of the title of the poem itself. He has called it a legend and a symbol. This legend from the *Mahabharata* has been galvanized just to present the human relationships, the ordeals of life and the highest spiritual achievement. In the process, the symbols have had to be universalized. In addition to it, Sri Aurobindo had also used suitable images to help in articulation and communication of the experience of his spiritual *sadhana*.

Aswapathy is a symbol of a man of controlled senses or the lord of senses. The "Ashwa" or the horse is also a symbol of vitality, prana and force. Aswapathy, therefore, is also symbolic of a person who has mastered his energies,

prana and vitality and has full control over them. Savitri symbolizes an incarnation of the Sun's *Shakti*, the Divine Mother of Light. Savitri's birth as a daughter of Aswapathy signifies the perfect control over the lower particles of life. She overcomes her animal nature in order to have the grace of the divinity. The death of Satyavan symbolizes the necessity for a seeker of personal salvation to leave this earth and to establish himself in bliss in some higher plane. But his marriage with Savitri represents the grace of the Divine Mother.

Dyumatsena, the father of Satyavan, symbolizes the blind desires of a person. His blindness symbolizes his want of reason and discrimination that leads to dispossession of his empire by his enemies. In the material world, one has to compete against others for possessing the good things of life. Material greed and sensual pursuits lead to a weakening and a loss of reason and "Buddhi". This loss of "Vivek" or discrimination is in itself a type of blindness. The prayer in the *Gayatri Mantra* is for illumination of "Dhee" (the intelligence). The Gayatri is same as Savitri is. It is Savitri, the goddess of Buddhi whose meditation becomes instrumental in the restoration of his eyesight.

Only Satyavan is worthy of being chosen by Savitri, a symbolic embodiment of the Divine Mother's Grace as her mate, lord or husband. Satyavan and Savitri come to the earth after realizing the spiritual force in themselves. This symbolizes the

basic “oneness” of the *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. Savitri wants to share her blessings with everyone else. The whole creation is interlinked and interdependent. A truly perfect and spiritually evolved person can not think of his own personal gains and comforts. Savitri’s utterance expresses this very truth :

I climb not to the ever lasting Day,  
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night

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Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,  
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.....  
Too far thy heaven for me from suffering men,  
Imperfect is the joy not shared by all.<sup>32</sup>

It is, however, the death of Satyavan that is the one great symbolic representation of the whole world’s miserable plight before inexorable law of the earthly existence and its pre-ordained destiny. The reversible operation of its Fate, Savitri chooses Satyavan. Savitri takes the challenge and through her *tapasya* transforms her earth- body into the celestial body in which there hardly exists any fear of death. Savitri struggles all alone. Savitri strives but not for herself alone. She strives for the higher cause of spiritual zone of human aspirations:

She had risen up from body, mind and life;

She was no more a Person in a world

She had escaped into infinity  
 What once had been herself had disappeared;  
 There was no frame of things, no figure of soul  
 A refugee from the domain of sense,  
 Evading the necessity of thought  
 Delivered from knowledge and from Ignorance  
 And rescued from true and the untrue,  
 She shared the Superconscient's high retreat  
 Beyond the self-born word, the nude idea.

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The act of sacrifice is also a great symbol in *Savitri*.  
 The act of sacrifice is in their love. Savitri sacrifices her own  
 happiness and attachment to her parents by marrying Satyavan,.  
 Satyavan sacrifices his life before the law of fate. Savitri as a force  
 overcomes all her lower desires just for one act; and that act is to  
 save the life of Satyavan- a symbol to save light from the cruel  
 hands of the black forces :

There was no temptation of the joy to be  
 Unutterably effaced, no one and null  
 A vanishing vestige like a violet trace,  
 A faint record merely of a self now past,  
 She was a point in the unknowable.....  
 She was in That but still became not That.<sup>34</sup>

Sri Aurobindo saw in the dawn a very appropriate symbol of



darkness retreating before the onslaught of Light. The *Vedas* have some very beautiful verses in praise of *Usha*- the dawn. The vast potential inherent in this symbol was thoroughly exploited by Sri Aurobindo. The very beginning of *Savitri* shows the deep effect of the symbol of *dawn* so far as the elemental realities of the earth is concerned :

She had brought with her into the human form  
 The calm delight that weds one soul to all  
 The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy  
 Earth's grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears  
 Rejected the undying rapture's boon  
 Offered to the daughter of infinity.  
 Her passion flower of love and doom she gave  
 In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice  
 A prodigal of her rich divinity  
 Her self and all she was she had lent to men  
 Hoping her greater being to implant.<sup>35</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's genius has a great affinity with the Vedic mind and for writing this epic- the *Veda* of the modern times- he has employed images and symbols just as the Vedic Rishis had done for the *Vedas*. He was aware of this and once wrote, "Do not forget that *Savitri* is..... poetry cast into of symbolic figure..... it is really a new attempt."<sup>36</sup> Portrayed the prophetic character and the messianic purpose of its narrative,

Savitri is admittedly "a new attempt". So far as the symbolism in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo is concerned apart from the famous symbolists such as W.B. Yeats, George Russell, C Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Edith Sitwell, is entirely different.

Savitri is fully different from the creation of modern symbolists. The symbolism in Savitri is imbued with clarity, stability of character, luminosity of purpose and at times, is capable of a multi-planer movement and interpretation. The meaning, the idea, the experience they convey always carry an authentic touch with them, either from the poet's own experience or from their *Vedic*, *Upanishadic* and *Scriptural* and literary background. Symbolism in *Savitri* is of a sublime, sustained and superior character. Its greatest success is in its vast and cosmic scope and its appeal to the reader's inner self, bringing about its involvement in the movement, development and culmination of the narrative. The reader is not excluded from the throes and thrills of the experience that moves the poet himself so much.

Now examining the poetry in *Savitri*, in the light of the critical comments expressed by Sri Aurobindo relating to the shape and substance of the new poetry which, in his estimate is going to be the poetry of future- Savitri being a new experiment and a new attempt, a representative example of this type of poetry in his own words- one finds him remarking :

with the universal soul and mind.

The inspiring spirit and shaping substance of this new poetry, that which gives it its peculiar turn, raises the power of its style to the intuitive closeness or directness..... Poetry has been affected by the turn of the human mind in this age. The mind and the soul of race is now moving forward on the basis of what it has gained..... towards a profounder mood and a more internal force of thought and life. The intellectual way of looking at things is being gradually transcended or is raising itself to a power beyond itself; it is moving..... to intuitive experience..... to life and Nature as seen and felt by the soul in their spirit and reality.<sup>37</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's poetry in general and in *Savitri* in particular, is an ideal precursor of this change from the intellectual source to the spiritual that he anticipates to materialize in the best poetry of the future. This makes himself the ideal poet, the poet of the *Mantra* that he predicts will emerge on the scene of the coming poetic excellences. He further writes :

.....now there are coming a universal subjectivity of the whole spirit, an attempt towards closeness and identity, a greater community of the individual with the universal soul and mind..... The

communion of the human soul with the Divine is becoming once more the subject of thought and utterance. A self-exceeding of the intellect and a growth of man into some freedom and power of an intuitive mentality supported by the liberated intelligence is in its initial travail of a new birth.<sup>38</sup>

This “self-exceeding” of the mind that he speaks of is the very basic foundation of poetic creativity in *Savitri* and is the root of the perfect display of “the power of an intuitive mentality” in the composition of poetry. Sri Aurobindo writes further about :

.....the reconciliation of the full power and meaning of the individual with the full power and meaning of the universal, eternal and infinite.....

This enlarging of the particular to meet and become one with the universal and infinite.... is a very characteristic and indicative feature of this new poetry.<sup>39</sup>

In the above lines there is a critical ideal as well as an anticipation, a critical prophecy one may say. An ideal and a prophecy, a touch stone of literary criticism that the poetry in *Savitri* perfectly realizes, fulfils and illustrates. The union of the individual with the universal, eternal and infinite; the enlarging of the particular to meet and become one with the universal and infinite, are the most striking, salient and essential occurrences in

*Savitri*. The success of Sri Aurobindo's epic effort in *Savitri* has become possible by his successful communication of personal mystic and yogic realizations and revelations and by ability to elevate the legend to a universal and cosmic symbol. The whole narration has come to the reader through an ideally inspired, brilliantly conceived and skilfully employed symbolism.

The symbolism employed in *Savitri* completely fulfils the requirements of Sri Aurobindo's critical principles relating to the character and the features of the best poetry. Sri Aurobindo's symbols derive their origin, strength and power mostly from his astounding and unparalleled Vedic scholarship :

The human battle is represented between the powers of Light and Truth and the power of darkness. The elements of sacrifice are used as symbols of inner sacrifice and self offering.<sup>40</sup>

The poetry of Sri Aurobindo reflects the evolutionary process in the development of man's intellectual process. He is a seer-man and a Rishi of modern India. Sri Aurobindo experiences the points of evolution inside his mind and psyche and therefore, he experiences different images which finally become symbolic representation in his poetry. So, there are manifold symbols in his poetical works. He himself acknowledges the manifold aspects of his symbols :

Symbols are of many kinds. There are concealing images capable of intellectual interpretation but still different from either symbolic or allegorical figures and there are those that have a more intimate life of their own and are not conceptual so much as occultly vital in significance, there are still others that need a psychic or spiritual or at least an inner and intuitive insight to identify oneself fully with their meaning. In the more deeply symbolist- still more in the mystic poem, the mind is submerged in the vividness of the reality and any mental explanation falls for short of what is felt or lived in the deeper vital or psychic response.<sup>41</sup>

There are many kinds of symbols such as "Dawn", "Fire", "Bird", "The Sea", "The River" and "Colour" in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Dawn is the pre- dominant symbol which stands for the "reawakening of man and is also stands for incessant human desire for spiritual awakening. It signifies the craving of man for an eternal Dawn, the Dawn of divine consciousness".<sup>42</sup> In "Urvasie", king Pururavus while coming back from heaven after the war with the titans gazes at the quiet Maiden East watching the birth of Day "as if a line/ of some great poem out of grimness grew slowly unfolding into perfect speech".<sup>43</sup>

The concept of "Dawn" in *Urvasie* is not something physical but it is spiritual, for *Urvasie* is *Usha*, the mother of life. She is the goddess of Light and Dawn. Light is the power which gives life to the Earth. All creation comes to stand still if dawn fails to appear on the Eastern earth. It is in *Savitri*, the symbol of "Dawn" reaches to its highest point. In the very beginning of *Savitri*, it has been entitled as "*The Symbol Dawn*". It suggests the spiritual point of re-awakening :

A thought was sown in the unsounded void,  
 A sense was born with in the darkness depths  
 A memory quivered in the heart of Time  
 As if a soul long dead were moved to live;  
 But the oblivion that succeeds the fall  
 Had blotted the Crowded Tablets of the past.<sup>44</sup>

Another symbol that takes place recurrently in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is of "fire". Fire or *Agni* is described as the force of Rudra and it becomes a force of cleanliness and purification. It also stands for truth consciousness and divine energy at the instance of Vedic symbols. *Agni* or Fire is described as the most important and the universal truth of the *Vedas*. He burns and also purifies; "Human passions and emotions are the smoke of *Agni*'s burning."<sup>45</sup> *Vedas* present *Agni* in the double aspect of power and light : the power of building worlds and the power of the perfect knowledge. *Agni* has been described as

*Jatavedas*, the knower of all births : “Agni is also the immortal in the mortals ; the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him.”<sup>46</sup>

There is one poem, “Flame Wind” in which Sri Aurobindo uses the symbol *Agni* in a very effective form. K.D. Sethna remarks that this poem “is a half house between the mystical poetry of the past and the unique Aurobindonean afflatus.”<sup>47</sup> Here are a few lines of the poem, “*Flame Wind*” :

A Flame-wind ran from the gold of the East,  
 Leaped on my soul with the breath of a seven fold noon,  
 Wings of the angel, gallop of the beast!  
 Mind and body on fire, but the heart in swoon.  
 .....O flame, thou bringest the strength of the noon  
 But where are the voices of morn and the stillness of  
 even  
 Where the pale- blue wine of the noon?  
 Mind and life are in flower, but the heart must grieve  
 Gold in the mind and the life flame’s red  
 Make of the heavens a splendour, the earth a blaze  
 But the white and rose of the heart are dead  
 Flame- wind, Pass! I will wait for love in the silent  
 ways.<sup>48</sup>

The mind and the life of the poet are in full bloom like a flower.  
 But the heart of the poet continues to grieve. The mind of the



poet is enriched by the Divine Knowledge that comes in the shape of the flame- wind. He visualizes heaven's splendour and earth's glorious blaze. But the poet ends the poem on a peculiar note.

The next important poem for the symbol *Agni* is *The Bird of Fire*. The intensity of symbol is more piercing than the previous poems for the symbol of fire. It is at once a bird and a fire. The bird of flame goes to the West with gold- white wings through the vastness of the sky. It sojourns very high and finally makes its abode in the heart of the poet. "It brings a silent and free spirit to the world and along with it a love divine."<sup>49</sup> The poet says :

Like the blood soul climbing  
The hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,  
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver gold altar vase  
Of moon- edged night and rising day.<sup>50</sup>

Fire as symbol in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is the bringer of light and the reflection of the Divine Consciousness. The fire in *The Bird of Fire* is suggested of the "fiery human soul". *The Bird of Fire* is at once suggestive of the Divine Knowledge.

There comes another very important symbol of "bird" in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The bird has been used as image and symbol by Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and so many other

poets of the West. Sri Aurobindo at the instance of the Romantic poets has made an application of the symbol of bird to his poetic creation. The bird in the Vedic symbolic series symbolizes "a free spirit".<sup>51</sup> Sri Aurobindo also uses the symbol of bird for the human soul. The journeys of king Pururavus and Aswapathy remind one the symbol of the bird. *The Blue Bird*, though a very small poem, shows the quest of human being for the stage of liberation:

I am the bird of God in his blue;  
     Divinely high and clear  
 I sing the notes of the sweet and the true  
     For the god's and the seraph's ear  
 I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth  
     Into a griefless sky  
 And drop in the suffering soil of her birth  
     Fire- seeds of ecstasy.  
 My pinions soar beyond Time and Space  
     Into unfading Light;  
 I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face  
     And the boon of the Spirit's sight  
 I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;  
     I have perched on Wisdom's tree  
 Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise  
     By the streams of Eternity  
 Nothing is hid from my burning heart;

My mind is shoreless and still;  
 My song is rapture's mystic art,  
 My flight immortal will.<sup>52</sup>

"Rhetoric" in literature expresses the deeper meaning of literature; "but the rhetoric of one kind or another has been always a great part of the world's best literature."<sup>53</sup> Sri Aurobindo points out that Demosthenes, Cicero, Bossuet and Burke are rhetoricians, but their work ranks with the greatest prose style. In poetry the accusation of rhetoric might be brought against such lines as Keats.

Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations tread thee down.

The Bird as such becomes a dominant symbol in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The bird in *The Bird of Fire* again presents him as a Yogi. The mental and spiritual progress of the poet can be experienced through this symbol. The rich and the red breast of the bird like "the blood of soul" suggests a soul which shows its quest for the higher bliss. Even in *Urvasie*, the journey of Pururavus to the higher realms of Godhead has also been suggested through the symbol of "bird". Pururavus as the earthly king remains in the fulfilments of the quest of her soul. The Rajarshi (Saint King) aspires for Urvasie, a Divine nymph. Thus, he goes and moves to onward journey which leads him to the search of Urvasie :

Then northward blown upon a storm of hope  
 The hero self- discrowned, Pururavus,  
 Went swiftly upto the burning plains and through  
 The portals of the old Saivaalic hills  
 To the inferior heights, nor lingered long...<sup>54</sup>

And he finally reaches the heavenly zones. If Pururavus is the symbol of the craving human soul, his journey upward is suggested by the movement of a soaring bird, signifying the spiritual quest of life.

Savitri presents the highest realization of the symbol of "bird". The entire epic symbolizes the yogic experience of Sri Aurobindo. That *Savitri* becomes a literary and spiritual symbol for the Yogic realization of Sri Aurobindo; it is an example of the integral yoga. Savitri comes down in answer to the call of the human race. At every point the poet emphasizes this phenomenon. The Divine Consciousness descending into earthy life and gracing the world with human forms is itself symbolic in *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo paints the scene thus :

A voyage upon uncharted routes  
 Prompting the danger of the unknown  
 Adventuring across enormous realms  
 He broke into another Space and Time.<sup>55</sup>

The Sea and the Rivers are major symbols in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. "The Vedas speak of the two oceans- the upper and the lower waters, the ocean of the subconscious dark and inexpressive and the ocean of the superconscious, luminous and eternal existence. From this supreme ocean flows the seven rivers, the waters of truth and bliss. These waters flow in heaven. They are the inspiration which awakens truth consciousness or God consciousness in man."<sup>56</sup> Sri Aurobindo in *The Secret of Veda* finds the form of ocean as the ocean of heart- "hrdayat samudrat" and this ocean provides us "Ghrtasya dhara". Sri Aurobindo divides sea into two parts : the sea of subconscious and the sea of superconscious. The river symbolizes the dynamism and the pure human consciousness; and the river flows from the subconscious form of the sea and comes to the superconscious.

Sri Aurobindo finds such kind of symbol even in the Puranas which show Vishnu sleeping on Anantha after the great *pralaya*. Here Anantha stands for infinity. The ocean of Vishnu represents the symbol eternal ocean. Therefore, in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo ocean becomes the symbol of infinite and eternity. But one hardly finds any distinction between the higher and lower ocean in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo though he frequently uses the symbol of sea in his poetry. In the poem *To the Sea*, Sri Aurobindo says that sea gives him and humanity a message that is to be followed by the poet and should also be followed by the humanity enmasse :

O grey wild sea,  
 Thou has a message, thunderer, for me  
 Their huge wide backs  
 Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks  
 Dug deep between.  
 One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen  
 I hear thy roar  
 Call me "Why dost thou linger on the shore."  
 With fearful eyes.<sup>58</sup>

The images such as "wild sea", "thunderer", "pale boat" with the verb of an animal image "flutter", "roar" give yet a deeper message so far as the wide backs and the monstrous form of sea is concerned. The inspired poet asserts himself and claims that man is mightier than the sea. The river of human mind seeks to reach the heights of heaven through the subtle ocean of Divine Consciousness. "If the eternal Goad-head is the goal of man, the sea is the way through which he can reach the Divine Abode. The path is not an easy one to tread. What is involved is yoga and a sadhana, pain, difficulty and danger are the barriers that man must cross to reach the destination."<sup>59</sup>

The poet compares the power of man with that of sea and finds that a man stands superior to sea in his might. In the following lines, with the metaphor of the "rude sea", the poet challenges even the might of the sea :

Take me be  
 May way to climb the heaven, thou rude great sea  
 I will seize thy mane  
 O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;  
 Or else below  
 Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,  
 Receive thy weight  
 Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate  
 I come, O Sea,  
 To measure my enormous self with thee.<sup>60</sup>

In another poem, *Ocean Oneness*, the poet in the possession of an eternal calm, sees the silent form of the sea:

Silence is round me, widerness ineffable  
 White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;  
 A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,  
 Azure on Azure, is mutely gazing  
 Identified with silence and boundlessness  
 My spirit widens clasping the universe  
 Till all that seemed becomes a Real,  
 One in a mighty and single vastness  
 Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,  
 Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite  
 And sole in a still eternal rapture,  
 Gathers all things to his heart for ever.<sup>61</sup>

The poet reaches a silence, wide and vast and ineffable. The sea he reaches is also soundless and the heaven he meets is voiceless. The spirit of the poet widens, clasping the universe :

The horizon of his consciousness goes on widening until all that "seemed becomes Real, one in a mighty and simple vastness. There he feels the presence of someone deeply in thought. Who is this someone?- bodiless, nameless, conscious, lonely, deathless and infinite. Every single word adds strength to the vision of the poet and to the comprehension of the reader.<sup>62</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has not written many poems on the River. There is only one poem with the title The River. He regards the river in the wild form and it is approaching to meet its bigger wild form, "sea":

Far now is that birth place mid abrupt mountains  
and slow dreaming of lone valleys.<sup>63</sup>

The lines above suggest the thought that the stream of human consciousness has started millions and millions of years back proceeding farther and farther to reach the sea of Divine Consciousness.

If Rabindra Nath began the poetry of Bhakti Yoga and accomplished it as Indian English poetry, Sri Aurobindo wrote the poetry of Jnana Yoga. He wrote the poetry of spiritual truths and



values which he wanted to accomplish in society. Thus the process of thought itself becomes the symbolic process in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo.

According to him there are five great Sums of poetry- they harmonize and blend the vision and intuitions of the poet. Truth, Beauty Delight, Life and Spirit are the five Sums of poetry. He strongly believed that the ultimate purpose of poetry is to bring Beauty and Bliss to the human heart. Such Beauty and Bliss can come to human life and enlighten the spirit only when the Truth - the ultimate spiritual Truth- is enshrined in the temple of Poetic Muse.<sup>64</sup>

There are many short poems such as *Revelation*, *Reminiscence*, *The World of Science*, *Thought the Paraclete* and *Soul, My Soul* are the poems which reflect the symbolic thought process in Sri Aurobindo's poetry. In *Reminiscence*, though a short poem, the poet's soul hears the voice of the conscience. This voice comes to him in the form of the "solitary bird" with the image of "winged compeer". Then after the poet finds lustre and realizes the sensibility of an eternal sojourn. Infact, the voice that the poet hears is the voice of his thought. The contact with the Divine archangel brings back to the poet's mind to the conscious realization. This thought takes him to the eternity and the poet recalls how he woke up and made the skies and built the earth and

formed the ocean. In Revelation, Sri Aurobindo talks of the illusiveness and the evasiveness of the idea :

Some one leaping from the rocks  
 Past me ran with wind blown locks  
 Like a startled bright surmise  
 Visible to mortal eyes -  
 Just a cheek of frightened rose  
 That with sudden beauty glows  
 Just a footstep like the wind  
 And a hurried glance behind  
 And then nothing- as a thought  
 Escapes the mind ere it is caught  
 Some of the heavenly rout  
 From behind the veil ran out.<sup>65</sup>

The textual and critical analysis done so far in this chapter bring the fact into light that Sri Aurobindo uses freely the myth, mythopoeic vision and their symbolization and objectivization in his poetical works. Sri Aurobindo derives his symbols and myths mostly from the Vedas, Puranas and the Upanishads. This way he reveals the tradition of India and its rich cultural heritage with the myths and symbols from the Vedas and from the nature, the poet sings the spiritual hymns; and at the same time brings his spiritual and metaphysical reflections in his poetry. His poetry thus becomes symbolic of the seer- poets and remains on the tradition of Rishis of ancient Indian cultural heritage.

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# CHAPTER-V

## **SPIRITUALITY AS THE LEITMOTIF IN HIS POETRY (HIS OVERHEAD POTERY)**

## **Spirituality As the Leitmotif in His Poetry**

### **(His Overhead Poetry)**

---

Mira Alfassa who is known to the name of the Mother has once remarked about the philosophic vision of Sri Aurobindo:

It is an enormous spiritual revolution rehabilitating matter and the creation.

Here the term "rehabilitating" denotes a procedure meant for restoring to health or normal life by training and therapy after imprisonment. The term at the same time governs two apparent contradictory processes: matter and creation. It becomes obvious that the presence of matter is therein creation and creation finally denotes two things: the cultural evolution and the upgradation of human consciousness to the level of *Satchitananda*, the highest form of the evolution of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo talks of the range of poetry which governs the cultural and spiritual processes as the theory of evolution. Sri Aurobindo stresses repeatedly on the Vedantin philosophy for its evolution.

Poetic experience, to Sri Aurobindo, is an experience of the psyche, of human sensibility which, atleast in the responses to the basic vicissitudes of man's life and destiny, does not vary with the colour of skin, eyes or hair. Therefore, as Mira Alfassa suggests in her statement, the situation during Sri Aurobindo's time



was complicated. One sees to have "schizophrenia in the national psyche and again in individual psyche. The divide in the national psyche is between the literatures of the older indigenous traditions who evaluate current literature in the vernaculars which maintain continuities with the classicism and the critics who lost their links due to historical reasons."<sup>1</sup> Here, one frequently finds the schizophrenic behaviour : the critics make an application to the critical criteria of Indian Poetics in their evolutions of old Sanskrit Poetry and current vernacular poetry. They also switch over to the Western critical apparatus in appraising English poetry or even poetry in their mother tongue.

According to Indian Poetics, which Aurobindo applies linguistically in the composition of his mantric poetry, shows the fact that the - "chemistry of emotions is escalated to a magical alchemy in the creative blending of feelings highlighted by Indian theory or clarifies the reluctance of Sanskrit Poetics to equate the final state of repose (*visranti*) in relish with either specifically ideational (*savikalpa*) or totally non-ideational (*nirvikalpa*) meditation."<sup>2</sup> The Indian Poetics finally accomplishes the effective states of mind through its emotional theory (*vibhava*, *anubhava*, *sancharibhava*). Thus Sri Aurobindo concentrates on the state of *nirvikalpa* (meditation), which becomes his mantric poetry in his philosophic vision; and it provides a vision and a moral lesson to create a perfect harmony and coherence between the spirit and the

matter. For example, in his short poem *The Meditation of Mandavya*, Sri Aurobindo regards God present among all the objects of nature, matter and beyond, not in any form as a conscious *void*:

And now I say there is no God at all,  
 But only a dumb void that belches forth  
 Numberless larvae and phantasmal shapes  
 Into a void less happy than itself  
 Because this feels. O, if this dream were true,  
 This iron, brute, gigantic helpless toy  
 They call a world, this thing that turns and turns  
 And shrieks and bleeds and can not stop, this victim.<sup>3</sup>

The poem cited above is based on the theory of Indian Poetics that blends the theory of various emotions. God as "dumb void" becomes *adbhuta* rasa. The aesthetic context created by the poet is both a representation and re-representation as the process of rehabilitation. He begins with the abiding affective reactivities of man (*sthayibhava*) which have been shaped by nature (*prakrti*) and aquired culture (*seela*). And they correspond to sentiments of "Organised Constellations around an entity."<sup>4</sup> Triggered by the stimuli, the latent reactivity becomes manifest as an excited emotional state. As in ancient Greece, aesthetic theory was developed first in relation to drama and then transposed to other literary categories. In drama, human beings are

presented in situation that re-present life. Ultimately, all literatures produce *bibhatasa* as the leitmotif of human emotion and human evolution, because *bibhatasa* inspires and instructs us. One finds the miraculous power of *bibhatasa* when Keats writes the line, "through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways" or when Racine's Phedre announces the ultimate penance she decided upon:

Par un chemin plus lent  
 descendre chez les morts.  
 (Through a road more long)  
 (descend among the dead)<sup>5</sup>

Sri Aurobindo while analysing the metaphysics of his poetry comes very near to the theory of emotions of Indian Poetics. The theory of *rasa* finally leads to the realization of the highest through undergoing the experiences of various *bhavas*. For example, Sri Aurobindo comes to the *sthayibhava* of *Santa rasa* through *bibhatasa* in the following lines:

Not Love, but Death disguised that strokes its food  
 And all good in the world is only that,  
 A death that eats and eating is devoured,  
 This is the brutal image of the world.<sup>6</sup>

The term "brutal image" defines yet the range of aesthetics in human life. The figurative expressions were but different modalities of the simile and all that figures were born from the

womb of the simile (an image). It is now appropriate to define the term image with reference to Sri Aurobindo's phrase "brutal image":

The image is a pure creation of the spirit. It cannot emerge from a comparison but only from the bringing together of two more or less distant realities..... No image is produced by comparing ..... two disproportionate realities. A striking image on the contrary, one new to the mind, is produced by bringing into relation without comparison two distant realities, whose relation the spirit alone has seized.<sup>7</sup>

Yet another feature that continues in the evolutionary theory of Sri Aurobindo is his Overmind/ Overhead philosophic vision. Aesthetic, as we have analysed, is concerned mainly with beauty, and more specifically with *rasa*. It denotes a particular mind set, the vital feeling and the sense to certain "taste" which may and may not be with the motifs of spiritual thinking. Aesthetic covers the mental range of the author and the reader. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between the literary aesthetics and his vision of Overhead. He points out about the philosophy of Overmind thus:

The Overmind is essentially a spiritual power. Mind in it surpasses its ordinary self and rises and takes

its stand on a spiritual foundation. It embraces *beauty* and *sublimates* it; It has an essential aesthesis which is not limited by *rules and canons*; it sees a universal and an eternal beauty while it takes up and *transforms* all that is limited and particular. It is besides concerned with things other than beauty or aesthetics.....It has the truth of spiritual thought, spiritual feeling, spiritual sense and that at its highest the truth that comes by the most intimate spiritual touch or by identity. Ultimately, truth and beauty come together and coincide, but in between there is a difference.<sup>8</sup>

Sri Aurobindo here speaks of two things separately: beauty and truth. If the beauty reveals the physical aspects, it remains at a distance from the essentials of truthfulness. He, at the instance of Indian Poetics, creates two sense of beauty : *bhava* and its transpersonalization. The real idea of beauty or the highest truth of human life can hardly be confined to any rules and regulations. The range of real poetry is to transform what is personal into the universal validity of human mind; and this universal validity rationalizes the art of objective views or the art of *sadharnikarna*. This is the stage which is described by the famous Indian poetician, Bharata : "*niyatkrit niyam rahitam*"- the world of the poet is a world without rules and regulations. This is the stage which is

being described by Keats: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty/ All ye know and all ye need to know." There hardly exists any difference between beauty and truth, because truth finally merges with the eternal beauty.

The following lines of *Savitri* describes in detail the image of "void" which is used recurrently in almost all the poems of Aurobindo. He prefers to use the term "void" in place of "vast" in order to work out his Overhead spiritual vision:

As if a child like finger laid on a cheek  
Reminding of the endless need in things  
The heedless Mother of the universe,  
An infant longing clutched the sombre vast.<sup>9</sup>

He himself explains these lines with the instructions that one might have an objection to the word "finger" and the "clutch" which move one only to change "reminding" to "reminded" in the second line. It is not intended that the two images "finger laid" and "clutch" should correspond exactly to each other; for the "void" and the "Mother of the universe" are not the something. The "void" is only a mask covering the Mother's cheek or face.

What the "void" feels as a clutch is felt by the Mother only as a reminding finger laid on her cheek. It is one of the advantages of the expression "as if" that it leaves the field open for such variation. It is intended to suggest without saying it that

behind the sombre void is the face of a mother. The two other "as if"s ("As if a soul long dead were moved to live/ As if solicited in an alien world")<sup>10</sup> have the same motive. The second is at a sufficient distance from the first and it is not obtrusive enough to prejudice the third which more nearly follows.<sup>11</sup> For his Overhead philosophy of the spiritual vision, Sri Aurobindo follows the mantric effects of the Vedas. He is of the opinion that the Veda is primarily intended to serve for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. He conducts his own enquiry on the hypothesis that the Veda has a double aspect (internal and external) and these two closely related aspects must be put apart. The central motif of the Vedas is the transition of human soul from death to immortality.

It is in this context that the Veda and the Upanishad have addressed man as "Amritasyaputra" (son of immortality). He also finds that the gods, as described in the *Vedas*, are the children of light and sons of "aditi" (infinity). At the instance of a linguist and philologist, Sri Aurobindo describes that words like the plants have a natural growth and have the organic form with certain seed-sounds as their basis. According to Sri Aurobindo, this world has been called as a place of swar and in this mere exists the *Agnirasa* (dominant emotion) that is the final emotion of *sat-chita-ananda*. This plane of super-conscious Truth, the *Swarloka* of Veda and "vijñānamaya kosha" of the Upanishad is the "summum bonum" of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy. The aim of his integral yoga

is transformation of man into Superman- a being who is expected for her/his *avataar* on this earth. In the Super- epic *Savitri*, he has defined the Vedic "rtan" thus:

The cosmic empire of the Overmind,  
 Time's buffer state bordering Eternity,  
 Too vast for the experience of man's soul:  
 All here gathers beneath one golden sky  
 The Powers that build the cosmos station take  
 In its house of infinite possibility;  
 Each god from there builds his own nature's world;  
 Ideas are phalanxed like a group of sums  
 Each marshalling his company of rays,  
 All Time is one body, Space a single look.<sup>12</sup>

Sri Aurobindo here tells about the unity of the space and the indivisibility of the process of time. The division of time is man-made and is a kind of illusion.

In the continuity of the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo, the influence of the Bhagavadgita can be felt and seen in the poetic composition of Sri Aurobindo. The genius of the *Gita* reveals the essence of the Upanishads, which are accepted as the scriptural tomes of the Vedic lore. Sri Aurobindo like other Rishis of India understood the *Gita* and has written some remarkable "*Essays on the Gita*". According to him, *the Gita* is a great synthesis of Aryan spiritual culture. It teaches us the technique of



action and inaction. It always lays emphasis on non-attachment to action and inaction. Sri Aurobindo has clarified that in the Gita the Sankhya and Yoga are only two convergent parts of the same Vedantic truth; it also deals with the two concurrent ways of approaching its realization: the one philosophical and intellectual analysis and the other intitutional,devotional, practical, ethical synthesis.

The teaching of the Gita emphasizes inner askesis (i.e. '*Tapas*' or austerity of conscious force) as distinct from physical asceticism. Sri Aurobindo explains Arjuna's dejection and bewilderment and his explanation related to the behavioural aspects of Arjuna becomes the stepping stone to his Overhead vision of life:

The refusal of Arjuna to persevere in his divinely appointed work proceeded from the ego sense in him, "ahamkara." Behind it was a mixture and a confusion and tangled error of ideas and impulsions of the sattwic, rajastic, tamasic ego, the vital nature's fear of sin and its personal consequences, the heart's recoil from individual grief and suffering, the clouded reason's covering of egoistic impulses by self deceptive specious pleas of right and virtue.<sup>13</sup>

A heavy barrier of unseeing light.

Sri Aurobindo regards the renunciation and self-sacrifice as the virtues for the attainment of the highest form of life. The true renunciation lies in the inner rejection of desire and egoism. Without such norms, the outer physical abandoning of works is a thing unreal and ineffective. Knowledge (*jnana*) is essential, because there is other way to get the liberation from *maya* (*illusion*). Devotion is all important, but work with devotion are also important; by the union of knowledge, devotion and work the soul is taken up into the highest status of God.

Sri Aurobindo follows the higher teachings of the Gita in the composition of magnum opus *Savitri*. Its first character Aswapathy fails to realize the highest form of human actions and the blessed world of God. Savitri follows her journey through the external phenomenology of all the matter with some temptations; but she does not yield to these temptations and finally completes her journey:

Her being entered into the inner worlds

In a narrow passage, the subconscious's gate,

She breathed with difficulty and pain and strove

To find the inner self *concealed in sense*

Into a dense of *subtle matter* packed

A cavity filled with a blind mass of power,

An opposition of misleading gleams,

A heavy barrier of unseeing sight,

She forced her way through *body* to the soul,  
 Across a perilous border line she passed  
 Where life dips subconscious dusk  
 Or struggles from Matter into chos of mind,  
 A swarm with elemental entities.<sup>14</sup>

In the cited passage the metaphoric expressions such as "inner worlds", "the narrow passage", "the subconscious gate" bring forth the inner war of the protagonist with her enemies in the form of physical sensuousness and the range of the "subtle matter" which itself is the beginning of Savitri. But the Overhead projection of Savitri is based on the karmas. The actions are meant for *nirvana* and for the negation of lower particles of life or the matter for the realization of the highest boundary of soul. The constant will to force her way among the negatives of *tamas* (from "body to soul") she passes the boundary of the perilous zone of human sensibility where lies the subtle zone of "subconscious dusk" and finally overcomes the "elemental entities" of the physical world. Sri Aurobindo himself comments in his *Letters* about the chief motif of the composition of *Savitri*:

In this poem, I present constantly one partial view of life or another temporarily as if it were the whole in order to give full value to the experience of those who are bound by that view, as for instance, the materialist conception and experience of life, but if any one charges me with philosophical inconsistency then it only bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and

means that he does not understand the technique of the Overmind interpretation of life.<sup>15</sup>

In his dealing with spiritual Overhead vision, Sri Aurobindo makes an application to reveal the range of Ignorance which almost hinders the onward journey to Godhead of a *sadhaka*. He even remarks that whenever he is not satisfied with any passage in *Savitri*, he opts to change it. Even in the beginning of *Savitri*, one finds the following passage changed one for the philosophic vision of Overhead spirituality:

Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;  
 A nameless movement, an unthought idea  
 Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,  
 Something that wished but knew not how to be,  
 Teased with Inconscient to wake Ignorance.  
 A throe that came and left a quivering trace  
 Gave room for an old tired want unfilled,  
 At peace in its subconscious moonless cave  
 To raise its head and look for absent light  
 Straining closed eyes of vanished memory,  
 Like one who searches for a bygone self  
 And only meets the corpse of his desire.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Sri Aurobindo has made an application of the teachings of the *Gita* in his spiritual Overhead vision. But as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and

spirituality to human life, he stresses more and more on human actions. Sri Krishna and Arjuna and the battlefield of Kurukshetra are within us, as also among our mundane environments. It immediately becomes symbolic of truth, consciousness and righteousness. It also symbolizes the struggling soul of Savitri in order to reflect her mental-intellectual apparatus and the trial and the tribulations of life. If one thinks of seriously the inner philosophic sermons of the *Gita*, one can achieve victory over the kauravas of our lower nature and attain the height of our evolutionary consciousness. This is also called in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo as the *Supramental Consciousness or the Evolutionary Philosophy*.

The philosophy of evolution is related to the various theories put forward through Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) and it has since then become the dominant feature of speculative philosophy. Along with Darwin, Henri Bergson also advanced the philosophy of creative evolution. His philosophic vision of "elan vital" as the life force moves forward and backward and decides the divergent views of human life. The Matter has also been personified as *elan vital* in universe direction. Sri Aurobindo regards this doctrine of *elan vital* as secret God or veiled divinity; it negates the illusive view (mayic view) of the world. Bergson before Sri Aurobindo reveals in his, *Creative Evolution* that *Matter and Memory* give the fact that *elan*

*vital* is unceasing creativity without any end or goal. However, Bergson regards the fact that the supreme goal of the *elan vital* is to create gods or supermen. He also holds that through technology, man would so much mechanize the matter so that it would take the matter in the form of spiritualization. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo talks of transforming the matter into spiritual mode. Sri Aurobindo not only perfected the way of Yoga, but also introduced newer assumptions in his integral philosophy.

As opposed to the older assumptions, Sri Aurobindo accepts the reality of the world of matter, life and mind that is world revealed by science. Formerly, according to the doctrine of *jivanmukta* or *bodhisattva*, the released soul in this earthly frame could preach the right way and through his example a *jivanmukta* was expected to lift the fallen masses into greater awareness. This leads him/her to the final goal of reality. Here is one example from *Savitri*: Savitri as a realized soul comes back to earth; she performs her spiritual journey which can also be called the evolutionary process in the words of Sri Aurobindo. She as a perfect female comes back on the earth as a simple human being. She as an ideal wife presses "the living body of Satyavan". She is very much conscious of her human figure and all her "being rejoiced" enfolding the body of her husband. Savitri, after triple forces of journey and as a realized soul, once again takes the form of an earthly lady. Sri Aurobindo paints the sole motif of Savitri as a wife:

Human she was once more, earth's Savitri  
 Yet felt in her illimitable change  
 A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth  
 A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven;  
 Light too intense for thought and love too boundless  
 For earth's emotions lit her skies of mind  
 And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul  
 All that is sacred in the world drew near  
 To her divinity passivity of mood  
 A marvellous voice of silence breathed its thoughts.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy is grand and vast, but it is a metaphysics. Metaphysics for me is not nonsense, but it is the deeper poetry of the soul evoking larger intellectual horizons and opening new perspectives and visions. But it can claim no scientific knowledge and cognition. It is enough if it succeeds in elevating people by its conceptual symphony. The Overhead/ Supermind philosophy of Sri Aurobindo leaves an impression that nothing remains either to do or to think beyond its range. Freud, Jung and Sri Aurobindo think that social improvement can come about by improving the individual. This stand is consistent with the age old tradition of Indian sages who pleaded repeatedly the process of self-conquest. Society as the life blood of an individual moulds him as an ideal character of it.

Socialism gives meaning to each individual by using and

harnessing it in the service of the whole state. Thus, the evolution of an individual is a matter of state, society and the vigilant intellectuals. The Yogic process of Sri Aurobindo strengthens the resolve of man and makes him a man of national culture. Sri Aurobindo describes the collective responsibility of society and man to mould the ideals in a man in his short poem "Vision of Science":

In these grey cells that quiver to each touch  
The secret lies of man; they are the thing called L  
Matter insists and matter makes reply.  
Shakespeare was this; this force in Jesus yearned  
And conquered by the cross; this only learned  
The Secrets of suns that blaze afar;  
This was Napoleon's giant mind of war  
I heard and marvelled in myself to see  
The infinite deny infinite.<sup>18</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in this scientific poem analyses the mythic as well as the genius of the world. These great men at the instance of their leniency manage their personality among the odds of society. The infinite possibilities that one holds them within are evidenced only through the self-conquest.

As an optimist, he always thinks of Vedic culture which reveals the Vedic enunciation of Truth about the Supreme Reality- the one indivisible, omnipresent (*sachchidananda*). *The*



*Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo has organized intuitive flashes into a steady light which throws a continuous illumination all along the path of the seeker, the pronouncements of Super-Consciousness in the Veda and the perceptions of pure Reason in the *Upanishads*. The chief mission of *The Life Divine* is to manifest the highest characteristics of being, of consciousness and of delight. This is the divine life, which is the aim of human life and its highest fulfilment. Sri Aurobindo is hopeful that in future, there will be a positive growth of the man on the leniency of Superman:

I saw the mornings of the future rise  
 I heard the voices of an age unborn  
 That comes behind us and our pallied morn  
 And from the heart of an approaching light  
 One said to man, "know thyself infinite  
 Who shalt do mightier miracles than these, infinite,  
 moving and infinite."  
 Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed  
 For thou, O Splendour, art my concealed  
 And the grey cell contains me not, the Star  
 I outmaster and am older than the elements are  
 Whether on earth or far beyond the sun  
 I, stumbling, clouded, am the Eternal one.<sup>19</sup>

Evolution at present is an accepted fact, for the modern, elites do believe in its progression. Nietzsche, Bernard

Shaw, Bergson and others project the superman idea. Bergson, the French philosopher, is of the opinion that intuition would be the guide of man in future instead of his instincts, emotions and his vacillating reason. According to Sri Aurobindo, the new race would be truth-conscious and moral would be the hall mark. The main thing in us is our consciousness. It is from that point of view that the *Gita* declares that the Soul is indestructible. There is something higher and eternal in us and that is the most important part of us. The Gita says that there is *Paramatma* also in us along with the *Atman*. *Paramatma* is not somewhere in the temple, somewhere in the books, somewhere in the mantras of the *Vedas* or any other religious book. It is in the body that *Paramatma*, the Super-Conscious, is living, is recognisable, is realizable and that can be done by human efforts.

Sri Aurobindo in his spiritual explorations, finds that any enigmatic issue/problem can be solved in researching the inner Atmic (spiritual) force. There is a distinction between Atom and Atma: the atom is one sided while the atmic power is manifold having the capacity to guide, to mould and to uplift man from matter to metaphysics. The stage that humanity has already attained is not the matter but the efforts of consciousness. That introspection also gives rise to the discovery of our aspiration to hasten our progress towards perfection. Such aspiration is "utsa" (rise above) which pushes us upward, urges us to go onward. That

is the eternal fire (agni) mentioned in the *Vedas*. Sri Aurobindo has told us that this inspiration of ours has a meaning. It is not mere wishful thinking; it is not merely a dream or a hallucination. The writers of the *Upanishads* said long ago, *Astoma Sadagamaya* (lead me from falsehood to truth); *Tamso Ma Jyotirgamaya* (lead me from darkness to light); *Mrityorma amrtamgamaya* (lead me from death to immortality). This kind of theoretic postulations, Sri Aurobindo materializes in the character of Savitri. *Savitri*, the *magnum opus* of Sri Aurobindo brings forth the Overhead philosophy in detail.

To Sri Aurobindo, human life is an evolutionary process- a process which transforms man gradually from lower nature to higher consciousness. Nature evolves Matter and manifests life beyond life, and it also manifests Mind. Therefore, "She must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence, a Supramental or truthfulness and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit."<sup>20</sup> What are the original resources behind the story of Satyavan and Savitri derived from the *Mahabharata*? It is rather very difficult to pin point one reason for his intention for writing this epic. However, his intensive reading and weighing the story and the life sketch of Satyavan and Savitri inspired him for working on the superhuman concept. It is appropriate here to quote a few lines of his letter written to Sri Man Mohan Ghosh in 1899, his strong liking for a character like Savitri

in the entire narrative of the *Mahabharata*:

Are Rama, Sita, Savitri merely patterns of moral excellence? I, who have read their tales in the 'Swift' and mighty language of Valmiki and Vyasa and thrilled with their joys and sorrows, cannot persuade myself that it is so. Surely, Savitri that strong, silent heart with her powerful and subtly indicated has both life and charm, surely Rama puts too much divine fire into all he does to be a dead thing- Sita is too gracious and sweet, too full of human lovingness of womanly weakness and womanly strength ..... Are these not here sufficient materials of beauty for the artist to weave into immortal vision.<sup>21</sup>

This letter with some arguments of Sri Aurobindo for the devotion of *Shakti* either in the form of Savitri or Sita exhibits obviously the growth of some seeds in the inner regions of his mind. This way, he intends to work out seriously some philosophic revelations through the character of Savitri. Savitri as a woman of "strong silent heart" and with undaunting will power becomes perennial source to Sri Aurobindo for revealing the evolutionary process of human being. This incessant yearning of a spiritual leader of this country enkindles in him a curiosity to experiment the higher norms of poetry and the gradual growth of supermind in

man. Sri Aurobindo does not regard poetry as the entertaining form of literature; it is a serious art which serves both the purposes of life: *yoga* and *bhoga*. To quote Sri Aurobindo is to define the higher norms of the poetic art:

Poetry, like all art, serves the seeking for these things: this Aesthesis, this Rasa, this Bhoga, this Ananda; it not only brings us a Rasa of word and sound but also of the idea and, through the idea, of the things expressed by the word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even, if the poet is strong enough, of their world- essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things. Poetry may do more than this, but this at least it must do to however small an extent or it is not poetry.<sup>22</sup>

In this citation Sri Aurobindo comes near to Indian Poetics, which suggests not merely (though it is) the association of word and sound; but through them there comes a suggestion. This suggestion is named as "idea", "thought" or "world-essence" by Sri Aurobindo. In the opinions of Bhatta Nayak, Lollata and Sankuka, the process of *Rasa* or aesthetic delight takes three different stages to complete itself. The first stage is obviously that of *abidha* (denotation) where the words of dramatic text render

their primary meaning. The second stage is that of *bhavana* or *sadharnikarana* (world-essence/transpersonalization of emotions). Because of this phenomenon, the spectator's mind becomes free from all kinds of delusion or ignorance, and he attains the level of an ideal spectator (*sahrdaya*). In the third stage known as "*bhoga*" (delectation), his mind is:

Dominated only by *satya* or purity, to the utter exclusion of *rajas* and *tamas*, the tendencies of delusion and stupefaction in human nature; and then only he experiences the supreme joy of art, comparable only to the bliss emanating from the Supreme Brahman.<sup>23</sup>

Sri Aurobindo too talks of the Supreme Brahman or the position of *Ananda* in the highest form of poetry. The *sahrdaya* (responsive reader) relishes the poetry from the detached angle, and with the necessary aesthetic or psychic distance (*tatasthya*). It is only then that the real meaning or beauty of the poetic contents dawns upon him, and he becomes the recipient of the highest aesthetic bliss. Sri Aurobindo too remarks on the line of Indian Poetics about the universal validity of the poetic contents:

It is the universal Ananda that is the parent aesthesis and the universal Ananda takes three major and original forms- beauty, love and delight, the delight of all existence, the delight in things. Universal

Ananda is the artist and creator of the universe witnessing, experiencing and joy in its creation.....

Ecstasy is a sign of a return towards the original or supreme Ananda; that art or poetry is supreme which can bring us something of the supreme tone of ecstasy.<sup>24</sup>

Sri Aurobindo divides the conscious level of man into two parts: the lower consciousness and the higher consciousness or the Overhead spirituality. The former creates the opposites to a *sadhaka*; it symbolizes the working of ugliness in love and beauty, sense of attraction and repulsion, grief and pain, joy and delight. Thus, the duality of human nature becomes detrimental to the higher self of man. At the higher level of consciousness, there is always the sense *tatasthya* (neutrality). Sri Aurobindo defines it as the highest spiritual point of human nature and calls it "ecstasy". Sri Aurobindo regards the generic superiority of poetry for the visionary aspects.

*Savitri* as a legend and a symbol serves the two prime motifs of Sri Aurobindo: it symbolically brings into being an evolutionary process; and an awakening in man as to how to cross the existing physical barriers emerging from human body for the higher vision of life. To make subsidiary the lower and sticky particles of human thinking, the character of Savitri attracts him and he writes this great epic for the regeneration of mankind. Sri

Aurobindo borrows the tale of Satyavan and Savitri from the original story of the *Mahabharata*. In the *Mahabharata*, this story has been told in seven cantos in the *Vana Parva* of the *Mahabharata* by Rishi Markandaya. He tells this story before the exiled king Yudhishtra. Aswapathy, the king of Madra, retires in seclusion from his kingdom for eighteen years in order to perform austerities as the representative of humanity. He gets a boon from the Mother Goddess for her incarnation in his house and she takes the form of Savitri. Thus, Savitri as a human being with perfect equanimity of human mind and the purity of conduct symbolizes in this epic a force that removes the prevailing darkness from the earth. The story of *Savitri: A Legend and A Symbol* has been divided into three parts having twelve books of forty nine cantos spread over nearly 24000 lines.

The keynote of Savitri lies in the symbolic presentation of the Overhead vision of Sri Aurobindo:

Satyavan is the soul carrying of the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death of ignorance; Savitri is word, a daughter of the sun goddess, the supreme truth who comes down and is born to save; Aswapathy, the lord of horses, her human father is the lord of *Tapasya*, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal



planes; Dyumatsena, lord of shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the divine mind here fallen blind loosing its celestial kingdom of glory.<sup>25</sup>

These words of Sri Aurobindo reveal the fact that varied mythical images and symbols are yoked together for experiencing the evolutionary process in order to become superhuman power.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision does not become a phantasy or an unrealistic- imaginative perception of human life; it is rooted deeply to realistic approach to human life. The earth as an organic force represents the divine force too. Sri Aurobindo thus hardly thinks of giving up any desertion of the divine earth in the quest of heaven. He becomes symbolic and suggestive of availing the fostering elements of the Divine Mother Earth for the pleasure of life. A Sri Aurobindo concept of heaven is not outside of human mind:

Thus, the concept of heaven lies in the mind of man. The evolutionary mind can transform the divine earth into heaven. There are opposite forces which are discernible in the respective *sadhana* of Aswapathy and Savitri. Some invisible powers create many obstructions in their journey to Godhead; but their strong will-power overcomes them and they finally succeed in their efforts.<sup>26</sup>

The apparent three journeys in this epic bring into focus the inner consciousness of the being for the process of becoming. The journey of Aswapathy, the master of horses, signifies the *tapasya* of a seeker after God, but he swings between faith and doubt. At the first stage, Aswapathy remains engrossed for his personal emancipation which results into an obsessive stoppage of his journey. Aswapathy's mind was intoxicated "with nectarous rain" and he appears somewhat passionate with his personal desire which was filled "with luminous wine".<sup>27</sup> At the later stage when he comes across the difficulties arising against his *sadhana*, he questions about his failures, and after sometime he finds an appropriate answer for his questionings thus: "The one he worshipped was within him now/ flame pure ethereal- tressed, a mighty face."<sup>28</sup> As a *sadhaka* he confronts many difficulties in his onward march to Godhead. The poet also shows some obstacles which result due to an intervention of physical attraction and repulsion:

Against his spirit all is in dire league,  
 A Titan influence stops his Godward gaze  
 Around him hungers the unpitying void,  
 The eternal darkness seeks him with her hands,  
 Inscrutable Energies drive him and deceive,  
 Immense implacable deities oppose.  
 An inert soul and a somnam bulist Force

Have made a world estranged from life and thought.<sup>29</sup>

Aswapathy as a *sadhaka* is surrounded by some dark forces. He finds no surety of joys on the earth nor the happiness of the heaven. The desire for his personal objective being instils in him the divine power and he now becomes engrossed in the good to humanity enlarge. With a "motionless still" he delves deep and awakens a staunch faith in himself and this leads him to a complete success in his *sadhana*. Amidst such trance-like state and with the perfect equanimity of his mind, he sees the Divine Mother who promises him to incarnate as his daughter for the emancipation of human being:

The spirit of beauty was revealed in sound:

Light floated round the marvellous Vision's brow

And on her lips the Immortal's joy took shape

"O Strong forerunner", I have heard thy cry

One shall descend and break the iron law,

Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power.

A limitless mind that can contain the world

All mights and greatness shall join in her;

Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth.<sup>30</sup>

The epithet "strong forerunner" describes an extension of Aswapathy's *Sadhana* for Super-Consciousness through the advent of Savitri. The phrase "to change nature's doom" becomes symbolic of removing the *tamas* (ignorance) from this earth. And

again, the phrase "a limitless mind" becomes indicative of the "Overhead" concept of Sri Aurobindo. From time immemorial, it has been the efforts of human beings to overcome the fear-psychosis either of life or of death or worldly pains and sufferings. The metaphor of "iron law" is followed by "all might and greatness". This shows the omnipotence of Savitri in human form.

She is a power who has been gifted with a strong will-power. She believes that "Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will." The arrival of Savitri on the earth symbolizes the overcoming of the fear-psychosis that arises due to the force of darkness. As a perfect human being, she shows an unflinching will to spread the light for others. At the instance of Milton's principle of justifying the ways of God to man in *Paradise Lost*, Sri Aurobindo too portrays the advent of Savitri on the earth with a divine radiance. Christ, a God-in-man, incarnates on the earth for the regeneration and emancipation of suffering of human beings. Savitri too stands for removing all karmic particles and the attachment of the scenes and situations from the earth:

A mightier influx filled the oblivious day;

A lamp was lit, a sacred image made

A meeting ray had touched the earth,

Bridging the gulf between man's mind.<sup>31</sup>

As "a mystic acolyte", Savitri is trained in "Nature's school".<sup>32</sup> She comes to the earth for seeking "the unknown"; she is a girl of

"superhuman heights" with an "inner vision of motionless verge". Savitri stands to discover "inward-musing shapes".<sup>33</sup> She is the possession of boundless knowledge which is greater than man's thoughts. She regards the earth as the right place for human love and benevolence.

As a mystic and as a *sadhaka*, she is in the possession of God's grace and sees His form in all beings: "Aware of the universal self in all/ She turned to living hearts and human form".<sup>34</sup> She sails the boat of her journey against the currents on the rudder of human love. She is self-poised character who begins her life after death on the earth. She grows in the house of Aswapathy upto a maiden goddess (*devarupini*). Her father instructs her: "seek and choose a husband for yourself." She thus begins her journey of the interior regions of human consciousness in the quest of her divine husband and finally she finds one in Satyavan (truthfulness). She chooses him as her husband inspite of the warning by sage Narada for the short span of Satyavan.

As a mystic acolyte, a being of superhuman strength and a girl of self-realization, Savitri never thinks of the warning she meets through the words of sage Narada. Savitri seems in the beginning of her journey an ordinary human being who, through her unconquerable will, aspires to make earth "a stepping stone to conquer heaven".<sup>35</sup> The human weaknesses, to Sri Aurobindo, can only be overcome when a man being unaware of his consciousness

becomes a biological being who lives merely to feed the physical necessities of lower nature of human body.

Savitri as a ray of hope for humanity spreads the light on the earth. Divine as she is, she also exhibits a complete perfection of a human being and wins over the lower particles of physical self. The images like "Apsara", "luminous eyed on earth" and "lapis lazuli" and "pearl" make Sri Aurobindo an encyclopaedic poet who collects the ores and uses them for the norms of higher poetry:

Our destiny is written in double terms:

Through Nature's contraries we draw near God

Out of the darkness we still grow to light

Death is our road to immortality.<sup>36</sup>

The reaction of Savitri against the prophecy of Narada about her choice for a divine husband also makes her an introvert and listens to the inner voice of her conscience.

She writes her destiny through her karmas. She decides to marry Satyavan inspite of Narad's warning of his early death. She now realizes that it is through penances and austerities she can overcome the concept of time (death). She now prepares herself to begin her spiritual journey to realize the inner regions of human psyche. Sri Aurobindo concedes to the presence of the brute in the inner contraries of human mind. In *Savitri*, the canto

entitled *The Entry in Inner Countries and Triple Soul Forces* of Book VII, Sri Aurobindo portrays the character of Savitri like an ordinary human being. She also witnesses the presence of the lower impulses inside her mind when she undergoes Freudian complex of ego and libido. She brings into being the womanly weaknesses when she realizes inside her mind, "the never ending fire"<sup>37</sup> of human nature. Sometimes the "passionate voice" of her mind makes her shirk from the higher pursuits of life, for she perceives a "chainless force" in her mind. The growth of her passions during her *sadhana* brings forth some heady draughts of "nature's primitive joy". She undergoes a kind of sensation that arouses in her

The fire and mystery of forbidden delight  
 Drunk from the world- libido's bottomless well  
 And the honey sweet poison wine of lust and death  
 The cycles of the infinity of desire.<sup>38</sup>

To get rid of the material points of attraction and repulsion is the essence of *karma yoga*. Like Milton's statement of universal validity, "The mind is its own place, and in itself/can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven", Sri Aurobindo also writes in Savitri, "our minds have made the world in which we live."<sup>39</sup> Being aware of his inner conscience and spiritual glow, Savitri "has arisen up from body, mind and life/She was no more a person in a world/She had escaped into infinity."<sup>40</sup> Savitri's oneness or the perfect

equanimity of human mind brings her near to *Bhagavadgita's* concept of *sthitiprajna*. Here are two examples: first from *Savitri* and second from *the Bhagavadgita* which bring into being Sri Aurobindo's Overhead vision of "Superamental Consciousness" and the state of *sthitiprajna*:

She was the single self of all these selves  
 She was in them and they were all in her  
 What seemed herself was an image of the whole.

In the same manner, Sri Krishna reveals His cosmic form before Arjun thus:

There is nothing else beside Me, Arjuna,  
 Like clusters yam-beads formed by  
 Knots on a thread, all this threaded in me.<sup>42</sup>

As luck would have it, she meets her fate when Satyavan dies in the forest; here she faces the challenge of the dark forces- Death Itself. The physical encounter of Yama and Savitri creates a wonderful scene between the soul and the dark forces of life. Yama calls Savitri's insistence for having the soul of Satyavan back, the yearning of her passions. Savitri as the harbinger of truth negates all the charges put against her by Yama. She replies that the arguments of Yama are based on falsehood; they reflect: "said strains of truth". With a heavy heart she removes all the doubts lurking in the mind of Yama about the right intentions of her:



But I forbid thy voice to slay my soul  
 My love is not a hunger of the heart  
 My love is not the craving of the flesh,  
 It comes to me from God, to God returns.<sup>43</sup>

Human love and truthfulness are the nucleus in the thematic contents of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Love bereft of human desires and lust triumphs over death. This is yet another symbolic aspect of *Savitri*. A deeper analysis for higher human love of *Savitri* invites some fine parallels between T.S. Eliot and Sri Aurobindo. In *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot also regards love as a regenerative process. He describes at the instance of Sri Aurobindo the higher human love thus:

For liberation not less of love/ but expanding of  
 love beyond desire,/ and so liberations from the  
 future as well as the past.<sup>44</sup>

Savitri reveals her spiritual power by which she intends for restoring Satyavan's soul. Death as such withdraws its evil forces and restores the soul of Satyavan. This "dire- universal shadow" vanishes now into the "void", leaving Satyavan rejuvenated for the love of man on earth. This withdrawal of Yama symbolizes a triumph (Savitri) over the dark forces (*Death*) for the restoration of soul (Satyavan). Finally, she meets the person she adores:

And Satyavan and Savitri were alone  
 But neither stirred: between these figures rose  
 A mute invisible translucent wall  
 In the blank moments pause nothing could move  
 All waited on the unknown inscrutable will.<sup>45</sup>

The evolutionary process in *Savitri* carries a plan of transforming human into divine, earth into heaven and human love as the base for conquering the forces of darkness and ignorance. Savitri, a saviour of human soul, represents an absolute power and Satyavan represents human soul (Atman). So, the unity of Satyavan and Savitri symbolizes *Satyam* (truthfulness), *Shivam* (goodness), and *Sundaram* (beauty). This unity also symbolizes "an evolutionary process as first born of a new supernal race set in the world to refashion human nature and earth nature."<sup>46</sup> Sri Aurobindo in the chapter entitled *Eternal Mate* of *Book XII*, plans the transformational dialectics of mind into supermind:

He is my soul that gropes out of the beast  
 To reach humanity's height of lucent thought  
 And the vicinity of Truth's sublime  
 He is the godhead growing in human lives  
 And in the body of earth being's forms  
 He is the soul of man climbing to God  
 In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.<sup>47</sup>

Sri Aurobindo also succeeds in professing his vision of human love and womanly duties in Savitri. In spite of her spiritual height, she promises Satyavan to her womanly passion:

She closed her arms about his breast and head  
 As if to keep him on her bosom worn  
 Forever through the journeying of the years  
 So far a while they stood entwined their kiss  
 And passion- trenched embrace a meeting point  
 In their comingling spirits one for ever  
 Two souled, two bodied for the joy of Time.<sup>48</sup>

Sri Aurobindo is a mystic first and the last. In a number of poems such as *Thought the Paraclete*, *Rose of God* and *The Bird of Fire*, Sri Aurobindo has also revealed his mystical experiences and gives us the points of mantric literature. He has not clothed his mystical experiences in human symbols and allegories, in images and figures of earthly and secular life. He represents them in their nakedness, just they are seen and realized and therefore appear obscure to the common human understanding. But there are poems like *A God's Labour* which, with lucidity and ease of expression outline and explain the central beliefs. The poem reveals the poet's belief of God, of the problem of evil and suffering in the world and of man's evolution to greater and more glorious heights:

in the same manner as man had appeared in the ranks of animals.

He who would bring the heavens here  
 Must descend himself into clay  
 And the burden of earthly nature bear  
 And tread to dolorous way.<sup>49</sup>

In his evolutionary and Overhead vision, Sri Aurobindo finds the solution of the universal problem in the process of Transformation. It lies in the descent of higher consciousness into the human mind, vital and body. Man himself is the product of transformation of animal consciousness into human consciousness.

To Sri Aurobindo, man has to strive for self- evolution to accelerate the tardy and cumbersome process of Nature for becoming man-divine. There comes a time when a man surpasses the bounds of animalism and comes to the higher self through the process of evolution. He exemplifies the great mission by transforming himself in the first instance from a political revolutionary into a man-divine. What Mother remarks about the achievement of Sri Aurobindo holds still valid : "What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching not even a revelation; It is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."<sup>50</sup>

Sri Aurobindo proclaimed that the appearance of Supramental Beings in the midst of human beings is inevitable, in the same manner as man has appeared in the midst of animals.

Supramental Beings will be the leaders and controllers of humanity. As man directs the activities of animal, the Supramental Being will direct the remaining persons of society. Sri Aurobindo is the poet who always advocated the Universal Town- Auroville at Pondicherry. In fact, the world vision of Sri Aurobindo is meant for uplifting a man from ignorance and bringing him to light and for leading a man from materialism to spiritualism.

The creation of Auroville brings forth "the universal vision of Savitri for it is meant to be the alchemy of a new spiritual faith emerging as a constant aspiration for *Life Divine* on the earth."<sup>51</sup> Sri Aurobindo is an encyclopaedic poet who expresses a kind of spiritual experience in Savitri which very few people would aspire or admit to aspiring to. His spiritual *odyssey- Savitri* has also modern relevance for its soothing effects to the tension - tormented men in this high - tech and dangerously ecological imbalanced age.

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# CHAPTER-VI

## HIS POETIC CRAFT

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As a poet of higher consciousness, Sri Aurobindo, leans upon the Vedic traditions, Vedic allusions, symbols, images, legends and myths in order to reveal his Yogic experiences in the craft of his poetry. Sri Aurobindo as a poet and as a seeker after God adopts a specific mode that becomes his tool to work on the spiritual height and the cultural norms of his mother land. He makes a declaration in his early days and perhaps his declaration becomes his principle to follow the embellishment of his language and the craft of his poetry. It is necessary of quote his declaration :

In the next great stage of human progress it is not a *material* but a *spiritual, moral and phychical* advance that has to be made and for this a free Asia and in her a free India must take the lead, and liberty is, therefore, for the world's sake, worth striving for. India must have Swaraj in order to live well and happily; She must have Swaraj in order to live for the world, *not as slave* for the material and political benefits of a nation, but as a free people for the spiritual and moral benefits of human race.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo stresses on three major aspects in his statement which was made during his struggle to achieve the

freedom. of this country; the achievement of Swaraj, the negation of material pursuits and the devotion to spiritual progression. These three aspects make the conformity of Indian culture and Indian spiritual heritage. His commitment was deep. So he devoted a great part of his writing in the *Arya* to the exposition of the pristine spiritual vision of India and the significance of her cultural and literary heritage. He also assigns the specific role to the composition of the poetic excellences. He finds the highest power of poetry not in material prospects but in spiritual pursuits. Pleasure should be one of the motifs of poetry, but it should basically be a mantric poetry :

For in all things that speech can express there are two elements, the outward or instrumental and the real or spiritual. In thought, for instance, there is the intellectual idea, that which the intelligence makes precise and definite to us, and the soul idea, that which exceeds the intellectual and brings us into nearness or identity with the whole reality of the *thing expressed*. Equally in emotion, it is not the mere emotion itself the poet seeks, but the soul of emotion..... So too with the poetical sense of objects, the poet's attempt to embody in his speech truth of life or truth of Nature..... It comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word; it is the

spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo includes three things in his theory : the range of intellect, the soul-vision and the truth of life. The poetry with its deeper structure becomes symbolic of the transpersonalization of human emotions. Sri Aurobindo as a poet and with his poetic magic follows the principles of Indian Poetics. Indian Poetics stresses on word-meaning association in order to find the universal vision/soul vision. Indian Aesthetics/theory of beauty in art and literature has perhaps been one of the early pursuits of the human mind. As literature and the various arts flourish in a society, the attempt to understand the exact nature and causes of their appeal to the reader or the connoisseur also finds a place in the thinking mind. Sri Aurobindo talks of “the voyage of self-discovery” through soul-vision. In the same way, Indian Poetics hardly regards the permanent physical presence of beauty; but the concept of beauty on the other hand refers to exploring the reasons for an eternal joy or the realization of rasa (*rasanubhuti*). The very small poem, Love and Death, written at early age by Sri Aurobindo reveals the power of the words and the essence beyond words. The poet sees a beautiful face peeping through his window and feels its snare being in contact with his soul-vision. He regards it as “witch of beauty” which catches him “in a net of sighs”.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo as the poet of total consciousness and as a skilled artist brings forth some symbolic paradoxes of the words. For removing the poison of the witch of beauty, he again looks at one “who has ever mocked as sin”<sup>4</sup> and gambles between loss and victory. The poet finally refers to the suggestive meaning or the truth of life or the higher motifs of poetry :

I will pluck you forth like a fluttering bird from her nest.

You shall lie on *Love's strong knees* in his *white warm* breast.

Afraid, with delighted lids that will not close

You shall grow white one moment, the next arose.<sup>5</sup>

The poet in this last stanza uses that linguistic competence which reveals the higher vision of life. The “wild witch” of beauty finally merges in “Love”. The “L” as capital becomes unique phenomena which in Aurobindonean philosophy symbolizes the concept of God. Again, the images such as “the strong knees” of love, “white warm breast” and the “white growth” become symbolic of the *Santa rasa* which creates the balanced approach and the victory of lower particles of human mind.

Bharata's account of Rasa in Indian Poetics is nothing but the analysis of the emotional experience through which the spectator goes while watching a dramatic performance on the stage. Prof. Y.S. Walimbe analyses the deeper motifs of the

emotional theory as propounded in his concept of *rasa* :

*Natyaveda* was promulgated by Lord Brahman himself as an object of diversion or recreation at the behest of all gods and the purpose of drama is to entertain the minds of the spectators and also to instruct them. Drama comprehends in itself all branches of learning, all arts, all crafts, all skill, all aspects of human nature and worldly behaviour, represented through gesticulation.<sup>6</sup>

The higher stage of emotion in Indian Poetics is realized through *rasa*; it is the realization of *rasa* that gives the final meaning of a word.

Thus if *Rasa* is not as object of cognition, should it be regarded as incomprehensible? Abhinav Gupta accepts this position, since the nature of *Rasa* consists solely in its relishability and not in its comprehensibility, and so on. The emotion based poetic craft of Sri Aurobindo hardly permits the repetitive process. Though he himself acknowledges the fact that the poetry of mystic-oriented ideas might be the poetry of repetition. He observes the fact that

In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable; it is resorted to by many poets, sometimes with insistence. I may cite as an example the constant

the "green joy". Again the adjective "green" is repetitive for

repetition of the word *rtam*, truth, sometimes eight or nine times in a short poem of nine or ten stanzas and often in the same line. This does not weaken the poem, it gives it a singular power and beauty. The repetition of the same key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, sometimes key lines or half lines is a constant feature.<sup>7</sup>

He openly acknowledges the fact that kind of repetition pertaining to the free play of words, images and symbols is being followed by him in the construction of Savitri.

Feel her bright nature's glorious ambience  
 And preen joy in her warmth and colour's rule  
 A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary  
 Her inward help unwarred a gate in heaven;  
 Love in her was wider than the universe  
 The whole world could take refuge in her single heart  
 The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell  
 Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air.<sup>8</sup>

The linguistic analysis of the passage from Savitri sums up the fact that the two words "ambience" and "preen" are linked with "a deep of compassion"; and they become rather repetitive in their approach. But "hushed sanctuary" is contrastive to the "preen joy". Again the adjective "great" is repetitive for

“great unsatisfied godhead”. Instead of writing such phrase, he acknowledges that the phrase “her greatness” would have more appropriate than the “great unsatisfied godhead”. Once again, his famous short poem “Ocean Oneness” repeats the phrases though in the changed manner.

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable  
 White birds on the ocean diving and wandering  
 A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven

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Azure on azure, is mutely gazing.  
 Identified with Silence and boundlessness  
 My spirit widens clasping the universe  
 Till all that seemed becomes the Real  
 One in a mighty and single vastness

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Someone broods there nameless and bodiless  
 Conscious and lonely deathless & infinite  
 And, sole in a still eternal rapture  
 Gathers all things to his heart for ever.<sup>9</sup>

The phrase “wideness ineffable” becomes the usual metaphor of “white bird” in Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. Again the “soundless” sea matches the sound of “voiceless” heaven. The phenomenology ends only when it becomes the “Real” with “R” Capital; and this reality becomes “One”- “single vastness”. So many images and



metaphor he uses in the same poem for the One- the imperishable God.

Sri Aurobindo deals with the manner of Wordsworth when he portrays the early life of *Savitri*. The similarity between Wordsworth's ideas of nature and Sri Aurobindo can be analysed through the early life of Satyvan :

Led by the wisdom of an adverse Fate  
 To meet the ancient *Mother in groves*  
 A faster child of beauty and solitude,  
 Heir to the centuries of the lovely wise  
 In her divine communion he had grown  
 A brother of the sunshine and the sky,  
 A wanderer communing with depth and dirge  
 A Veda-knower of the unwritten book  
 Pursuing the mystic scripture of her forms,  
 He had caught her hierophant significances.<sup>10</sup>

Wordsworthian attitude is discernible in the metaphor of "the ancient mother" who resides in groves. At the instance of Wordsworth's Lucy and Kalidasa's Shakuntala, Satyavan is the "foster child of beauty and solitude". He knows the Vedas not through the regular studies but through the inexpressible communion with God. The poet in the semi- Wordsworthian turn moves among a diversity of things, communing with their ultimate aspects and looking over the edge of the communion. The two

words used in the communing process of Satyavan with nature : “depth and marge”. The one shows the poet’s leaning of inside for realizing the “marge” and perhaps the noun “marge” finally becomes symbolic of the communication of divine power. Once again, the “hierophant significances” is representative of the two things : the word and its meaning. The real assessment of the word can be experienced only in solitude through its suggestive meanings. K. D. Sethna in his linguistic makes the poetic bulk of Sri Aurobindo “ensemble”<sup>11</sup> which denotes the process of togetherness. Sethna takes the ensemble from Book V, Canto 3. Here the inside of Satyavan amidst nature is analysed.

Sri Aurobindo in dealing with the merits of poetry and its craft uses such language which usually takes the form images and metaphor. Here are a few lines from *Savitri* :

Earth’s morns were mine;  
 Lured by faint murmurings with the green-robed hours  
 I wandered lost in woods, prone to the voice  
 Of winds and waters, partner of the sun’s Joy  
 A listener to the universal speech :  
 My spirit satisfied with in me knew  
 God like our birthright, luxuried our life  
 Whose close belongings are the earth and sky.<sup>12</sup>

In these lines the poet has used the adjective “luxuried” for the happy life of Satyavan. The language used is not an ordinary

language, but it is the language which is decked with the images and the metaphors of the highest order. For example, the poet has used four elements of nature, "earth", "water", "wind", and "sky"; but there is also the fifth one "fire" in the symbolic and metaphoric language. When Satyavan acknowledges that "my spirit satisfied with in me" and his spirit feels the store of energy inside him and this kind of feeling represents the element of "fire". Blessed with the elemental energies, he yields the fact that he listens to "the universal speech". Yet again, the poet writes about the solitary wanderings of Satyavan :

As if to deeper country of the soul  
 Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,  
 Through an inner seeing and sense a waking came.....  
 I caught for some eternal eye the sudden  
 Kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool  
 A slow swan silvering the azure lake,  
 A shape of magic whiteness, sailed through dream  
 Pranked butterfly, the conscious flower of air  
 And metred the rhythm beats of infinity.<sup>13</sup>

In the first three lines one sees the indication of a new awareness which is not on the surface but in the recesses of our being,- the recesses that are called "soul". In general speculation the term soul is employed for our "self" and that several countries are ascribed to it, some shallow and some deep, and that the

reference is not so much in the specific connotation- "a deeper country". The "soul" here is not here a generalization, it is acutely contrasted to "earth": the two turns- "of the soul" and "of the earth"- are balanced against each other: there are only two countries implied the country of the earth and the country of the soul. The former is the surfacial region, the latter is a deeper domain. And by "earth" with its "vivid" "imagery" is meant the contents of our normal waking consciousness. It is packed with thousands of observations where as the "soul" stands for a consciousness other than the life- force and mind operating in conjunction with a material body and brain.

This consciousness is ordinarily like a dream- region, but the poet undergoes a novel, "waking" there by which he reinterprets in a different and deeper light the earth experience. His reinterpretation involves the experience of new things in the soul's depths, things which are as if earthly objects "transposed" into them but which in reality exist in their own right. It is native to those depths which constitute the originals whose copies are earthly objects. The specific quality of the experience of these originals is to be gauged from the use of the word "soul" and no other. Poetry, to Sri Aurobindo, is not the exclamation of the mind and its concepts, not the cry of the life- force and its desires, not the appeal of the body and its instincts. All of them are audible in it, but in tune with a central note beyond them which- as Longinus

said- strangely transports us. There remains in “transportation” a mysterious presence, which one can specify as the Divine presence.

All fine poets do not offer us spiritual matter. They talk of a multitude of earthly things and some of them are even disbelievers. The Roman *Lucretius* scoffed at religion and said that the gods were created by human fear : he was a materialist and athiest by intellectual persuasion.<sup>14</sup>

It is true that sometimes excellent composition of poetry is hardly confined to any divine reality. But its divine power lies in its suggestive contents. Poetry is spiritual, by the intuitive manner in which any theme is diversely treated by the imagination. In the second place, poetry is spiritual by the expressive results. The imaginative treatment is reflected in its word power and the movement brought to us by the use the appropriate words. There is an inevitable phrase- pattern, there is an unimpeachable rhythm- design. In short a form of perfect art has been developed in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo uses the intrinsic divineness in his poetic craft. Sri Aurobindo at the instance of the Vedic theory adopts the theory of the word. The word in association with its meanings brings forth the total essence of the language. The poet as a magician hardly knows the secret of his own creation; his creation itself becomes a fragrance when it is

being judged on the principles of Poetics. Sri Aurobindo writes about the power of the word :

The words which we use in our speech seem to be, if we look only at their external formation, mere physical sounds which a device of the mind has made to represent certain objects and ideas and perceptions,- a machinery nervous perhaps in origin, but developed for a constantly finer and more intricate use by the growing intelligence; but if we look at them in their inmost psychological and not solely at their more external aspect, we shall see that what constitutes speech and gives its life and appeal and significance is a subtle conscious force which informs and is the soul of the body of sound : it is a superconscient Nature-Force raising its material out of our subconsciousness but growingly conscious in its operations in the human mind that develops itself in one fundamental way and yet variously in language.<sup>15</sup>

Here Sri Aurobindo echoes the same voice what Wordsworth has written in his poems :

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard

In Springtime from the Cuckoo bird

Breaking the silence of the seas

Among the farthest Hebrides-  
 Sometimes of the richer or more dynamic imaged style,  
 Flowers laugh before thee in their beds  
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;  
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong  
 And the most ancient heavens  
 Through thee are fresh and strong.<sup>16</sup>

In the above citation Wordsworth regards the sound of Cuckoo bird as “so thrilling” and it means very thrilling- the thrilling that creates the movement and vision in the mind of the poet. The Cuckoo bird symbolizes the power of language- a power that comes from the association of different words and creates the suggestiveness. Sri Aurobindo at the instance of Wordsworth creates so many images for showing the early life of Satyavan; and these images reflect the power of language in his poetry :

An alchemy worked, the transmutation came;  
 The missioned face had wrought the Master's spell.  
 In the nameless light of two approaching eyes  
 A swift and fated turning of her days.....  
 Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart  
 Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird  
 Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Aurobindo is a skilled artist/poet in using the linguistic competence through various images. The image of the “bird” has a

visual and moving effect.

The ancient Indian word for a poet is Kavi and the linguistic interpretation of the word is to "disclose". Of course, the disclosing, the making shows higher world of poet's imagination. The poet in Latin term has been defined as "Poeta" and in Greek "Poetes". Both the terms from Latin and Greek bring into being the sense of a "maker".<sup>18</sup> Thus, the vision is the first factor in the creation of the poet. The Indian name goes to its root of the matter in speaking of the seer who discloses instead of the discloser who has seen. Shakespeare bears out the Indian characterization, though he does not neglect the Greek and Latin, by the famous passage which describes what the poet does. In picturing the poet's activity he speaks of "the poet's eye" :

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothings  
A local habitation and a name.<sup>19</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his poetic craft has used freely the images and metaphors from India. The metaphors such as "Dawn", "Fire", "The Sea" and some mythological symbols and metaphors create the suggested contents in his poetry. The images such as "bird", the "river", colour images and some scientific and



mythological images make his poetry mystical. Dawn as the metaphor of the daughter of heaven represents typically the Indian sensibility. It stands for reawakening of knowledge in man; it also brings forth the inner desire of the being to be with spiritual height. It signifies the beginning and the craving for the end.

In Vedic literature Dawn is symbolic of new openings of Divine Illumination on man's physical consciousness. It is the illumination of the truth rising upon the mentality to bring the day of full consciousness into the darkness or half- lit night of our being.<sup>20</sup>

There are some very pregnant examples from the text of Sri Aurobindo which shows the power of elaboration and illumination through the metaphoric symbols. The early poems where the suggestion is not so striking come to our discussion for the metaphor symbol. The metaphor of dawn is the bringer of light, strength and divine forebodings :

Nearer it drew now to him and he saw  
 Out of the widening glory move a face  
 of dawn, a body fresh from mystery  
 Enveloped with a prophecy of Light  
 More rich than perfect splendour's. It was she  
 The Golden virgin, mother of life.<sup>21</sup>

As an extraordinary dawn it is the bringer of Divine inclination and Divine consciousness. The phrase "a prophecy of light" makes it very clear that this is the dawn that shows the spiritual awakening in man and more over, "it was she" decides the gender of the dawn; and this way it becomes "Usha", the mother of life and it is at the sametime is the golden virgin- a metaphoric representation of colour. The green fields and all living creatures take their existence to light and Dawn is the Goddess who heralds the arrival of light. Light is the power which gives life to the Earth. Thus Dawn as Usha is the mother of life. She brings to sight not only herself but the golden beauties of heaven amongst whom was *Urvasie*. Dawn is, for the first time, described in all its glory in "Urvasie".<sup>22</sup>

The poetry of Sri Aurobindo is riches of imagery. Broadly speaking, the whole poetry of Sri Aurobindo is concerned with images, since the poet is primarily the seer and visualizer. When any poet develops visionary approach, the images visit his/her mind and they immediately sprout in his/her creation. One finds so many images in his narrative poems such as *Urvasie* and *Savitri*. These images are of many kinds - conventional, experimental, sensuous - visual, aural, kinetic kinesthetic. They grow as directly or naturally as the plants in the soil. All his images are luminous, deep and arresting. They make us see and experience. They open up whole avenues of creative vision and various images analysed in these lines reveal the linguistic

imagination. They come from all sides of life- nature, society, daily life, science, technology and cosmos itself. But it is the visionary, revelatory and spiritual perception that is the primary source for most of his images, and it is these that work like flashes which communicate vision of the poet to the readers.

In the composition of his early poetry, one finds the poet's imaginative sensibility which become revelative through sparkling images. The poem, "Songs to Myrtilla" reveals the sparkling images of Sri Aurobindo :

Sweet is the *night*, sweet and coal  
 As to *parched lips* a running pool;  
 Sweet when the *flowers* have fallen asleep  
 And only *moonlit* rivulets creep  
 Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood  
 To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.<sup>23</sup>

The above lines bring yet panoramic views of different images. The metaphor of "Sweet night" is followed first by sensuous images such as "parched lips", "running pool" and the sleep of the "flowers". Next lines take the shift of thought movement and the night becomes silent with the imagery of "moonlit rivulets". Again, the "glow-worms" and "whispering wood" become symbolic of the mystic experience of the poet and that is the reason the poet shows a secret commune "with the quiet heart and solitude". The various images analysed in these lines reveal the linguistic

competence of the poet. There are a few lines, beginning with the metaphor of day. These lines are yet contrastive to the metaphor of the night - night that finally turns into an abode of quietude and solitude :

But day is sweeter ; morning bright  
Has put the stars out ere the light,  
And from their *dewy cushions* rise  
Sweet flowers half-opening their eyes  
O pleasant then to feel as if new born  
The sweet, unripe and virgin air, the air of morn  
And pleasant are her melodies,  
Rustle of winds, rustle of trees.<sup>24</sup>

The metaphor of day is followed with the images such as the “bright morning”, “dewy cushions”, “new-born flowers”, “unripe and virgin air”, “Rustle of winds” and “rustle of trees”. These images are contrastive to the metaphor of night. Night brings drowsiness while the metaphor of day becomes symbolic of a new awakening and a new consciousness to grow newly and afresh. *Urvashi*, the famous poem of Sri Aurobindo opens up with the exquisite images of the day :

Watching that birth of day, as if a line  
Of some *great poem* out of dimness grew,  
Slowly unfolding into perfect speech  
The grey *lucidity* and *pearliness*

Bloomed more and more, and over *earth chaste* again  
 The freshness of the *primal dawn* returned,  
 Life coming with a virginal sharp strength  
 Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.  
 Nearer it drew now to him and he saw  
 Out of the widening glory move a face  
 Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,  
 Enveloped with a prophecy of Light  
 More rich than perfect splendours, It was she,  
 The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life.

Spiritual experiences have been rendered vivid and concrete. The imagery of Sri Aurobindo hardly brings any strain and labour when one is drawn by the charm of something beautiful. Sri Aurobindo has been able to make "sense a road to reach the intangible". Images in Savitri illumine the inner meaning and reveal "home lands of beauty shut to human eyes". Here is an image in the very opening of the canto of the epic; Savitri marches onward in her quest of finding a "soul's mystic cave"; and she first steps "into a night of God".<sup>25</sup> As a mystic, Savitri too faces the boundaries of ignorance and wisdom. But the main thing one sees in her onward journey is her ceaseless effort. Here the intention lies in showing the poet's use of metaphoric language through the use of the appropriate images : metaphoric language

An awful dimness wrapped the *great rock-doors*  
 Carved in the massive stone of *Matter trance*  
*Two golden serpents* round the lintel curled  
 Enveloping it with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes  
 An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings  
 Flames of self-lost immobile reverie.<sup>26</sup>

Another picture in *Savitri* shows us an aspect of the Dawn, a pale mystic hand fixing a golden door on the Deep, through which one could peep into the mystery :

A wandering hand of pale enchanted light  
 That glowed along a fading moment's brink  
 Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge  
 A gate of dreams a far on mystery's verge.<sup>27</sup>

Another unified kinesthetic image of Joy travelling the roads of a solitary heart :

A jingling unified silver laugh of anklet bells  
 Travelled the roads of a solitary heart.<sup>28</sup>

It is significant to note that the image of the "sea" springs up time and again in Sri Aurobindo's poetry, it plays a vital role and it is particularly there when he refers to the poetic phenomenon. There is in the *Songs to Myrtilla* the image of the "blue sea" dancing like a girl. It, in fact, becomes a metaphoric image :

And sank vanishing in the blue sea

Her mind, a sea of white sincerity

Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.<sup>29</sup>

Imagery drawn from the sea is effectively used while describing Savitri's save passage through the valley of the "wandering gleam" :

All this streamed past her and seemed to her vision's  
sight

As if around a high and voiceless isle

A clamour of waters from far unknown hills

Swallowed its narrow banks in crowding waves

And made a hungry world of white and foam.<sup>30</sup>

As the waves strike down the Swimmer, Death abridges human life, as the sea roars its defiance, so does Universal Death. One finds another imagery of the sea voyage in the passage where he describes how many thoughts from a cosmic source come tranquilly to Savitri :

As smoothly glides a ship nearing its port,

Ignorant of *embargo* and blockade,

Confident of entrance and the visal's zeal,

It came to the silent city of the brain

Towards its accustomed and expectant quay

But met a barring will, a blow of Force

And sank vanishing in the immensity.<sup>31</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his short poem "A Vision of Science" reveals the scientific world through vivid images. He opines that man's curiosity to know the world around leads him to analyse "the laws of sight divined and laws of sound". In this poem he uses the refined images which bind the system of cells in human body. Sri Aurobindo as a poet links the past with present; and it means he makes an application to whole consciousness. He also elaborates the scientific reason for all these things in "A Vision of Science":

That comes behind us and our pallied morn,  
 And from the heart of an approaching light  
 One said to man, "Know thyself infinite  
 Who shalt do mightier miracles than these  
 Infinite, moving, mid infinities."  
 Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed,  
 For Thou, O Splendour, art myself concealed,  
 And the grey cell contains me not, the star  
 I outmeasure and am older than elements are  
 Whether on earth or far beyond the sun,  
 I, stumbling, clouded, am the eternal one.<sup>32</sup>

One may go on citing illustrations from his poems in order to prove that "Sri Aurobindo has a unique mastery of imagery. With the help of the double vision, the corollaries and sensuous images and vivid projections he builds a picture that not only delights and informs but also carries many layers of meaning".<sup>33</sup>



Sri Aurobindo adopts a specific style and technique in his linguistic apprehension and in linguistic competence. He considers technique as the indispensable element in his writings, in all writings. "Certainly in all art good technique is the first step towards perfection."<sup>34</sup> Various critics have pointed out the constant problem of repetition in his poetry. Sri Aurobindo replies such charges quoting a passage from *Savitri* :

As might a soul fly like a hunted birds,  
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms  
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,  
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose  
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,  
Recover the lost habit of happiness.<sup>35</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has six times repetition of the article "a" in this passage; and critics found this repetition of the article "a" superfluous. But Sri Aurobindo explains the reasons of his repetition in his letters appended to the last part of *Savitri*:

As to the sixfold repetition of the indefinite article "a" in this passage, one should no doubt make it a general rule to avoid any such successive repetition, but all rules have their exception and it might be phrased like this, "Except when some effect has to be produced which the repetition would serve or for which it is necessary." Here I feel that it does serve

subtly such an effect; I have used the repetition of this “a” very frequently in the poem with a recurrence at the beginning of each successive line in order to produce an accumulative effect of multiple characteristics or a grouping of associated things or ideas or other similar massings.<sup>36</sup>

What Sri Aurobindo has contributed in his style and linguistic competence is the need of a proper balance between the use of language and the theory of poetry. Sri Aurobindo writes the mantric poetry. The mantric poetry like *Ram Charita Manas* of Goswami Tulsidas flows naturally in the natural language. Sri Aurobindo defines the mantric poetry thus :

The Mantra is possible when three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. All great poetry comes about by a unison of these three elements.<sup>37</sup>

Amidst the various linguistic experiments, the one that becomes remarkably the first, is the style and technique of the poet. Style is the unison and fusion is close part of the poet's vision, because it is the style which makes Sri Aurobindo use freely the metaphors, legends, images and symbols. Style also includes language,

thought, mood and attitude.

Style, Sri Aurobindo believes, is a “living organism”, and “it is born and grows like any other thing.”<sup>38</sup> Poetry, says Sri Aurobindo, “opens to us by the word the doors of the spirit.” When Sri Aurobindo links the power of word with the theory of words, he actually suggests the theory of *Dhavani*- the suggestive contents in his poetry.

Sanskrit is said to be one of the oldest languages of the world. It has a deep potentiality to express any great truth in the simplest and the shortest manner. There are other poets and dramatists in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, who have shown their mastery, though not in the same grand scale as Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa in writing suggestive and symbolic poetry. Sri Aurobindo is a perfect example of a saint in the modern sense who is in the long line of the seer-poets of India. His writings, poetic and philosophical, point to his pre-eminence and his genius stands on par with that of the great seer-poets of ancient India.<sup>39</sup>

Savitri sees corpse of her husband in the forest. She was left alone in the forest. Motionless she was, and measured not her loss but thought of her will power. She was thinking of Satyavan and the most important thing in her loneliness is that she

thinks of only making her husband alive again. Sri Aurobindo at the instance of the ancient Indian poets, seers and monks uses the language of grand style in the chapter *Towards the Black Void* of Book IX of *Savitri* :

She crossed the borders of *dividing sense*,  
 Like pale discarded sheaths dropped dully down  
 Her mortal members fell back from her soul  
 A moment of a secret body's sleep,  
 Her trance knew not sun, or *earth or world*;  
 Thought, time and death were absent from her grasp  
 She knew *not self*, forgotten was Savitri  
 All was the voilent ocean of a will  
 Where lived captive to an immense caress,  
 Possessed in a supreme identity,  
 Her aim, joy, origin, Satyavan alone  
 Her sovereign prisoned in her being's core  
 He beat there like a rhythmic heart - herself  
 But different still, one loved, enveloped, clasped  
 A treasure saved from the collapse of space  
 Around him nameless, infinite she surged.<sup>40</sup>

Sri Aurobindo as a poet sees "beyond the sight of the surface mind and finds the revealing word, not merely the adequate and effective, but the illumined and illuminating, the inspired and inevitable word, which compels us to see also. To arrive at that

world is the whole endeavour of poetic style.”<sup>41</sup> As a seer-poet and critic Sri Aurobindo penetrates the mystery of future poetic speech. With a sound optimum he points out that under the impact of spiritual consciousness and power, poetry will undergo a deep change not only in its forms and frames but also in its word and rhythmic movement. For “the poetic word is a vehicle of the spirit, the chosen medium of the soul’s self-expression.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, any profound change becomes symbolic and suggestive of word and its rhythm.

There are five kinds of style in Sri Aurobindo’s poetry : the adequate, the effective, the illuminative, the inspired and the inevitable. The language that was employed in the first- the adequate- is the language of the prose statement. It has more compact and vivid presentation of the poetic form. The rhythm and the metaphoric language brings in a living appeal and adds something of an emotional and sensational nearness to what would otherwise be little more than an intellectual expression. The language used in the poetic style is of higher and of much finer quality. It has the power, not only to make us conceive adequately, but also to see the object or idea in a certain temperate lucidity of vision.

The “effective” and dynamic poetic style responds to the subject in a more complex, more vibrant manner, catching something of the movement rather than the stance of its subject. It

tries to go beyond perfect adequacy and “attempts a more rich or a more powerful expression, not merely sound and adequate to poetic vision, but dynamic and strongly effective.”<sup>43</sup> A rich, subtle poetic effectivity is achieved by the beauty and condensed phrases of language. Sri Aurobindo believes that English Poetry is especially opulent in effective style and gets from it much of its energy and power. Sri Aurobindo regards that without the use of the appropriate language, the effectiveness in poetry can hardly be realized. Sri Aurobindo himself defines the stage of perfection in poetry :

But then what do we mean by the perfection of poetry? There is the perfection of the language and there is the perfection of the word- music and the rhythm, beauty of speech and beauty of sound, but there is also the quality of the *thing said* which counts for something. If we consider only word and sound and what in themselves they evoke, we arrive at the application of the theory of art for art's sake to poetry..... From this point of view the elevation from which the inspiration comes may after all matter, provided the one who receives it is a fit and powerful instrument; for a great poet will do more with a lower level of the *origin of inspiration* than a smaller poet can do even when helped from the highest sources.<sup>44</sup>

Here in this extract Sri Aurobindo brings into being the two main things for the language manner and the contents of the poetry. The things said or what one say in the theory of Structuralism the signified object is the core of the poetic contents. Once again, Sri Aurobindo compares the two kinds of the poet : the poet by the usual behaviour and the poet of genius. The “things said” are the poetic contents and they should be inspirational in their appeal. Savitri after completing her journey through the triple forces comes back to the earth; she comes back to the earth just to realize the elemental realities of life. Just see the language and style of Sri Aurobindo in his elaboration about the conjugal love of Satyavan and Savitri :

The immense remoteness of her trance had passed  
 Human she was once more, earth's Savitri,  
 Yet felt in her illimitable change.  
 A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth  
 A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven;  
 Light too intense for thought and love too boundless  
 For earth's emotions lit her skies of mind  
 And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul.

Sri Aurobindo gives a complete account of Savitri: Savitri, a perfect household lady who dedicates her entire life in the service of her husband; and another Savitri who challenges the bounds of Time, Space and Dark forces. She becomes human and

Sri Aurobindo uses some wonderful images in his style for making the language functionary. The image of the “bird” befits the inner cry of the young husband and wife. The “bird” as “winged poet” becomes symbolic of the Skylark of Shelley and brings forth the poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo in a very simple language. Savitri aspires to come to the earth just for the sake of humanity enlarge. Sri Aurobindo has presented the human form of Savitri in a beautiful language and in the lucid style in *Book XII of Savitri*.

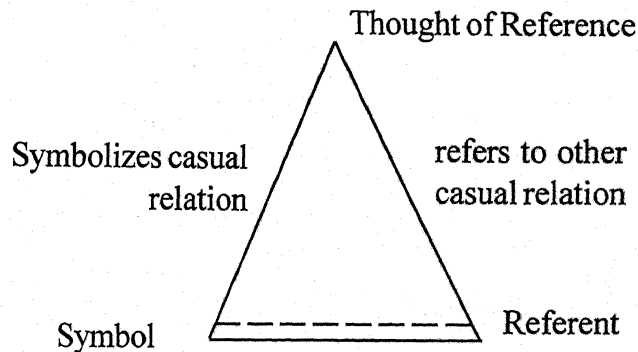
Our bodies need each in the same last;  
 Still in our beasts repeat heavenly secret rhythm  
 Our human heart- beats passionately close.  
 Still am I see who came to thee mid the murmur.  
 of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge;  
 I am the *Madran*, I am *Savitri*  
 All that I was before, I am to thee still.....  
 All sweet relations marry in our life;  
 I am *thy kingdom* even as thou art mine  
 The sovereign and the slave of thy desire  
 The prone possessor, sister of my soul  
 And mother of thy wants, thou art my world  
 The *earth I need*, the heaven my thoughts desire  
 The world I inhabit and the god I adore  
 The body is my body's counterpart  
 Whose every limbs my answering limb desires.<sup>45</sup>



Sri Aurobindo's poetic style consists in language. All other constituents of art have to be incorporated into language; and it is language that communicates and expresses them. But the language in a work of art is not the language of ordinary speech. Sri Aurobindo aptly points out the basic difference between the ordinary speech and poetical language. Ordinary speech uses language mostly for a limited practical utility of communication; for the expression of ideas and feelings necessary or useful to life. It is the conventional use of language, where words are treated "much as we use any kind of common machine or simple implement; we treat them as if, though useful for life, they were themselves without life."<sup>46</sup> The words which one uses in our daily life seem to be mere physical sounds. They, infact, represent some definitive objects and ideas and perceptions. But with the growth of civilization, one has to exert "a more vital power into them..... out of ourselves, by marked intonation of the voices, by the emotional force or vital energy we throw into the sound so as to infuse into the conventional word-sign something which is not inherent in itself."<sup>47</sup>

Sri Aurobindo in his above citation reveals the powers of the words : connotative, denotative and suggestive. In India all the schools of thought have assumed a direct relationship between *sabda* and *artha*, which correspond to the significant and signifie of de Saussure. P.C. Chakravarti says that

the theory of signs or symbolism as worked by Ogden and I.A. Richards has maintained in a peculiar position that goes directly against the view of Indian grammarians. The Ogden-Richards basic triangle has the following shape :<sup>48</sup>



In this triangle, one finds the direct relationship between the word and the referent and that the relation is only imputed. Sir A Gardiner uses the terms “word”, “meaning” and “thing meant” respectively for the “symbol”, “reference” and “referent” of the Ogden-Richards triangle.<sup>49</sup>

To Gardiner “a word can be used and re-used on many different occasions and..... the same word can be employed by all the different members of a linguistic community. It is infact something relatively permanent, wide spread and capable of being possessed in common by a multitude of individuals. All these considerations prove, beyond the possibility of contradiction, that words transcend and are altogether less evanescent entities than the sounds which issue from the speaker’s mouth and vanish into nothingness soon after they have reached the listener’s ear.

When Sri Aurobindo talks of two things at a time in his poetic theory : the conventional meaning of the word and the contents of the things said, he reminds one about the Indian theory of words. There are three powers of the word : *abidha* (connotative), *lakshana* (denotative) and the *vyanjana* (suggestive) ; and finally *abidha* and *lakshana* associate together for bringing into being the metaphoric and suggestive meaning of the language. In the same sense, there are two main categories of this “multiple meaning”, synonyms or *paryay - sabda-s*, where the same word is found to have various senses. Sanskrit language is full of synonyms and homonyms, and the various lexicons in Sanskrit deal with words usually arranged as *paryaya-s* and *nanatha - s*. Even Patanjali has drawn attention to this feature of language. He says that there are many words with the same sense, and the same word is also found to have different senses.

As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo by the term “things said” refers to the suggestive contents as the soul of poetry. This content is nothing but an ideation of *rasa - dhvani* theory. The Indian Poetics stresses more and on “*bhavaktva*”.

*Bhavakatva* is the power of universalization (*sadharnikarna*) which strips the *vibhavas - s*, *sthayibhava-s* etc., of their individual and personal aspects and generalizes them in the minds of the spectators endowed with the power of imagination;

and bhojkatva is the power by which the sthayibhava reaches its climax and is enjoyed by the spectators (this experience is described as something which can not be defined in words).<sup>50</sup>

Abhinava Gupta mentions three different psychological stages in the realization of rasa - dhvani theory in literature.

The first stage involves the cognition of the formal or intellectual elements of the poem, and serves as a means to the sound. The second stage consists of the idealization of things in poetry/drama by the power of imagination. The third stage can be marked as the climax of the inexpressible affective (emotional) condition of the reader or the spectator. The relish of rasa is manifested as a unity in the heart, leaving no trace of the constituent elements; and this is why the *rasa-dhvani* is called "*asamlaksya-karma-vyangya* or the suggested sense with imperceptible stages."<sup>51</sup> Even Sri Aurobindo in his letters written to the contents of Savitri acknowledges the theory of *rasa-dhvani* as the soul component of his poetic creation :

Rasa, which, passing through the mind or sense or both, awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste, Bhoga, and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit's delight of existence, Ananda. Poetry, like

all art, serves the seeking for these things, this Aesthesis, this Rasa, this Bhoga, this Ananda; it brings us a Rasa of word and sound but also of the idea and, through the idea of the things expressed (*dhvani*) by word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even, if the poet is strong enough, of their world- essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things (*virat rupa*).<sup>52</sup>

Aesthesis is the very essence of poetry. Indian Poetics regards Rasa as the essence of poetry. Therefore, Aesthesis becomes the instructional and the directive part of the poetry. Sri Aurobindo has written in his theoretical aspects about the yoga and bhoga in his poetic contents. Savitri comes back to the earth; and she thus represents the spiritual and the worldly power with a message to be followed in times to come.

Like a flower hidden in the heart of spring

The soul of Satyavan drawn down by her

Inextricably in that mighty lapse

Invisible heavens in a thronging flight

Soared past her as she felt. Then all the blind

And near attraction of the earth compelled

A greater harmony from the stillness born

Surprised with joy and sweetness yearning hearts,  
 An ecstasy and laughter and a cry.  
 A power leaned down, a happiness found its home  
 Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.<sup>53</sup>

As a matter of fact, the poetic style is nothing but the use of language. Sri Aurobindo believes that in the beginning of human speech, words had a real and vivid life of their own. The early poetic language had a vivid living quality which it lost in its sophisticated evolution, however, greatly it might have gained in precision, clarity and utility. When poetry uses language it seeks to recover this vivid element or power. The poet looks at word in their inmost psychological and not solely in their external aspect. The poet does it in a number of ways. The poet rises in the scale of poetic achievement by degrees as he "brings out not only the definitive intellectual value of the word, not only its power of emotion and sensation, its vital suggestion, but through and beyond these its soul suggestion, its spirit."<sup>54</sup>

For Sri Aurobindo, language is a living reality. It has its body and soul. The poet has to establish contact with its soul and has to obey her laws. This brings us to the consideration of diction which is an integral part of the style. It points to the way in which words are used for the purpose of creative expression. Words are the very basis of poetry as it has been stressed repeatedly in Indian Poetics. Though the words used in daily life,

in prose and poetry are the same yet in poetry, the order of the words is an order based on choice that is guided by the philosophic vision of the poet. Sri Aurobindo as a poet is deeply conscious of the power of words. In keeping with his spiritual vision and mystical experiences he has created a new poetic language and a new poetic genre. Before using the specific Aurobindonian idioms of language in *Savitri*, he followed English diction in his early poetry. His earlier work is representative of form, diction, rhythm and imagery at the instance of Milton, Shelley and Yeats. His early composition reveals the romantic temper and technique :

Love a moment drop thy hands;  
 Night within my soul expands.  
 Veil thy beauties *milk-rose* fair  
 In that dark and showering hair  
 Coral kisses revish not  
 When the soul is tinged with thought;  
 Burning looks are then forbid.<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes, one finds at the instance of Keats the double adjectives and compound images in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The double adjectives such as “a great priestly wind”, “wide-winged hymn” have justified his technique of language. He thinks that double usage and coinage of the words bring the specific literary effectiveness. *on and voluptuous weep. Here are*

Sri Aurobindo has employed poetic devices to embellish his poetic creations. He has very cautiously used the grand style through epic similes and through specific images. Sri Aurobindo has used freely the repetition of various words, idioms and images. The image of the sea occurs in various contexts in *Savitri*. The images such as “like a great sea”, “sea in ebb”, sea as “a lonely isle”, “an ocean impulse”, “a sea of white sincerity” and “an ocean of untrembling virgin fire” prove that Sri Aurobindo has freely repeated the same image in various contexts. “The mystic poet resort to *Avritti*, repetition as one of the most powerful means carrying home what has been thought, or seen and fixing it in the mind in an atmosphere of light and beauty.”<sup>56</sup>

The language, style and technique of Sri Aurobindo’s composition suit his vision. He uses blank verse in the same genuine way as Milton uses it in his *Paradise Lost*. His earlier poems *Urvasie*, *Love and Death*, written in blank verse reveal the influence of Milton in his poetry. He has combined in his poetry the delicate splendour of early Milton with the amplitude of the epical Milton : “The fusion of the early Milton with the late; this may be taken in general to characterize at its best the blank verse of Sri Aurobindo’s twenties.”<sup>57</sup>

His earliest poem of blank verse technique is *Urvasie*; and it brings the poetic craftsmanship of the poet. He brings like Kalidasa’s *afflatus* a sensuous and voluptuous sweep. Here are



some lines from *Urvasie* which show the astonishing expressiveness of Sri Aurobindo's blank verse :

.....But all was silent; only  
 Perhaps a bird darted bright-winged away,  
 Or a grey snake slipped through the brilliant leaves.  
 Thus wandering, thus in every mindful place  
 Renewing old forgotten scenes that rose,  
 Gleam after gleam, upon his mind, as stars  
 Return at night; thus drawing from his heart  
 Where they lay covered, old sweet incidents  
 To live before his eyes; thus calling back  
 Uncertain moods, brief moments of her face;  
 And transient postures strangely beautiful,  
 Pleasures, and little happy mists of tears,  
 Heart-freeing, he, materializing dreams,  
 Upon her very body almost seized.<sup>58</sup>

In *Baji Prabhou*, there hardly occurs passion and phantasy in blank verse. Its lines are a sustained effort energetic ardour. Here are some lines :

.....So was the fatal gorge  
 Filled with the clamour of the close-locked fight  
*Sword rang on sword*, the slogan shout, the cry  
 Of guns, the hiss of bullet filled the air,  
 And murderous strife heaped up the scanty space

Rajput and strong Maratha breathing hard

In desperate battle.<sup>59</sup>

The blank-verse of *Savitri* is in harmony with its scriptural conception. The Iambic-five-foot line of blank verse is adopted the most apt and plastic for creating internal association between the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadas*. In his *Illion*, he rather worked out the Homeric movement for the specific verse creativity. Sri Aurobindo has used the flowing rhythmic pattern in *Savitri*.

His rhythm is neither the neo-classic sings song nor the Shelleyan impulsive music nor Swinburne's monotonous word-sound but a powerful evocative incantatory sound- it is sound significance filling out word-significance that seems to awake some ancient memory in the soul..... As elevating and soothing in its effect as the *Gita*, the music of *Savitri* reverberates in the depths of our soul.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the overall assessment of Sri Aurobindo brings the fact into being that he is a conscious artist who also creates his own criticism; and on the pillars of his own criticism he writes his poetry. He regards the poet as a magician who works to create the spiritual sensibility for employing the appropriate images, myths and symbols in his language. One of the specific contribution of Sri Aurobindo as a poet lies in his significant statement that "poetry like everything else in man, evolves." It means that he

enjoys and holds a specific place among the poets of Indian English Literature, for he enunciates the mantric effects in his poetry. He is the poet who relates English Poetry to the natural ascending order; he creates the poetry of power, beauty, wonder and the poetry of spontaneous substance in the specific language that is the language of Sri Aurobindo himself, and nobody else's. Herein lies the greatness of Sri Aurobindo as a poet of unique craftsmanship.

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# CHAPTER-VII

## CONCLUSION



come all of a sudden from heaven; it was through the gradual efforts of the plural thinking that motivated Indian English Poetry to exist with its concrete steps. Literary history demonstrates that the temptation to disown one's predecessors is a universal phenomenon. The new poets are standing on the firm base which was prepared to them by their predecessors. Amidst the growth of the poetry, it is Sri Aurobindo who, like a great pioneer, has broken new grounds in the development of Indian English Poetry. He has raised high hopes and shown to humanity the way to transcend itself and transform its future. He has created and cleared the ground for fresh efforts and inspired new faith. He has worked as the spear-head of the human evolutionary urge and laid humanity under a permanent obligation to him.

Chapter II, *His Poetic Theory*, analyses in the text of the thesis about the theoretic norms that Sri Aurobindo has made an application to his poetry. The principles of Indian Poetics such as *Kavya-Swarupa* (the nature of poetry), *Sabda-Shakti* (the power of the word), *Dhvani* (suggestion), *Rasa* (the poetic expression) and *Alankara* (the figure of speech) pervade the contents of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Thus, it is difficult to come to the single point in defining the range of poetry according to Indian Poetics. However, Sri Aurobindo in the text of his short and long poems has given the prominent place to the theory of *rasa* and its *asvad*, which can be defined as the range of Indian Aesthetics. To

Sri Aurobindo, the word is not poetry, but it is the happy fusion of word and sound (*dhvani*) which stands for the essence of poetry. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is the happy fusion of sound and sense which promotes poetic delight in the mind of Sahrdaya (the responsive reader).

Sri Aurobindo in his poetic theory makes an application to aesthesis which is dominated by the concentric form of *rasa* :

Rasa ..... awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste (Bhoga) and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment to some form of the spirit's delight of existence, *Ananda*. Poetry serves the seeking for these things, *Aesthesis, Rasa, Bhoga, Ananda*; it brings us a Rasa of word and sound and thought a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even if the poet is strong enough of their world essence, their cosmic reality - the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo brings two facts in his theoretical points : that words and meanings in the poetical work; and the suggestion that emanates from the association of the word and its

meaning. In the *Rgveda*, it is said that great poets select their words, "Removing away the chaff from the grain", and only man of equal scholarship and literary taste (*Rasa*) can fully appreciate their poems. Sri Aurobindo in his literary theory does not deny the existence of fixed literal meanings for words and sentences. But they believe that over and above all these, there is the suggested meaning or the socio-cultural meaning. Sri Aurobindo in his poetic theory distinguishes poetic language from ordinary language. He points out "the two functions of the languages of poetry - *bhavakatva* and *bhojakatva* - in addition to the primary function *abidha* which includes *laksana* too. *Bhavakatva* is the power of universalization (*sadharnikarana*) which strips the *vibhavas* and *sthayibhavas*. They generalize themselves in the mind of the spectators who are having the power of imagination. And *bhojakatva* is the power by which the *sthayibhava* reaches its climax and is enjoyed by the spectators."<sup>2</sup> To Sri Aurobindo in all speech activity there are three things to be observed : expression, suppression and impression. Expression is given by the speaker and suppression is his reluctance to give; and the impression is what the hearer receives from the suggested contents.

Even in his early poetry Sri Aurobindo practices the literary principles of Indian Poetics. The skill, according to Sri Aurobindo, lies in his successful application of the suggestive pattern. As a matter of fact, *dhavani* (suggestion) is a dominating

element while *alankara*, *guna* and *vrtti* are its various parts. In his view *alankaras* are those, which embellish both of them just as the bracelet and the earrings embellish the body. They are concerned with the exterior form of poetry. Therefore, *dhvani* or suggestion which is essentially an internal element can not be incorporated into them. As is the case in Indian Poetics the suggestive element in the work of art can be made applicable of using the myths and symbols in order to universalize the inner secrets of the higher or spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo raises the question of "form" or "formless" about the presence of God. Infact, Sri Aurobindo materializes the myth, legend and symbolic representation of human life in his *magnum opus*, *Savitri*. As a theoretician of poetics, Sri Aurobindo believes that love and beauty are the source of joy (Ananda), as the light and knowledge are the joys of consciousness. Poetry, in Sri Aurobindo's opinion should aim at bringing the spiritual delight. The poet discovers within himself a profoundly spiritual vision; he thus writes about the Celestial Joy according to the norms of Indian Poetics. In Sri Aurobindo's poetic theory, one finds a balanced fusion between the spiritual and the material world. Sri Aurobindo thinks of the inseparability between the transcendent and the aesthetic joy. The Matter and the Spirit are wedded together; and therefore there lies a close and a secret bond between the body and soul. Thus, the great poetry,

according to Sri Aurobindo, is the Energy of the Transcendent. He regards it as the rhythmic voice of life and the inner beauty of being. There are many similar points between the poet and the spiritualist. Outworldly, they seem entirely different from each other, but imaginatively they are associated together.

Sri Aurobindo regards the art of poetry as the highest expression of the form of human speech. He sees the infinite meanings in the suggestive meanings of the words. The art of poetry expresses not only the life-soul of man as did the primitive word, not only the ideas of intelligence but the experience also in the form of cognitive mode. Making them real to our life-soul as well as present to our intellect poetry opens to us by the word the doors of the spirit.

The most important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's poetic theory lies in its form of mysticism. The mystic poetry hardly leaves a scope for any kind of argumentation. The mystic poetry works on the threads of alien and strange language that can also be defined as the language of suggestivity. This kind of poetic language can also be found in his early creative process, but it takes its vital form in his magnum opus, *Savitri*. Wherein one finds the evolutionary theory writ large. As opposed to the older assumption Sri Aurobindo in his poetic theory accepts the reality of the world. The poet, according to Sri Aurobindo, thinks of bringing the evolution in man's mind and even the description of

the worldly attainments can really be called the right theoretician of poetry. As a theoretician Sri Aurobindo teaches truth not to serve any ethical doctrine, but to have a life of its own and to embody beauty and to give delight. Sri Aurobindo comes near to Indian Poetics in his poetic theory. In Indian Poetics, the poet experiences aesthetic pleasure while composing the poetry. When the poet reads his own poetry, he finds the aesthetic delight of a *Sahrdaya*. When a poet does not feel aesthetic pleasure due to some reason, he is neither a poet nor a reader, but an ordinary man. However, the aesthetic delight and the spiritual transformation are the chief functions of poetry.

Chapter III, *Philosophical Revelation in His Poetry*, has been interlinked with the second one for analysing the philosophical motifs of Sri Aurobindo. Poetry as a matter of fact is the medium through which the blissful experience of the poet is transplanted into the mind of the poet. Sri Aurobindo is a man of multi-dimensional paradigm. He has been regarded as the prophet of Indian culture and religion. The chapter has analysed the various philosophical norms/principles in his poetry. The early poems of Sri Aurobindo such as *Songs to Myrtilla* has revealed his *skilful craftsmanship* in verse and works out his unique contribution as a poet. His early poems bring into being as the later one the spiritual glow of his mind set. However, some earlier poems of Sri Aurobindo appear as the primitive man's desire to establish contact

with the awe-inspiring forces of Nature and to please them for his own benefit.

In the philosophical order of Sri Aurobindo, the evolutionary process proceeds by a slow unfolding for each new principle that evolves its powers. Nature affirms at first a vague urge and tendency which is a sign of the push of the occult. There are four main lines which nature has followed in her attempt to open up the inner being: religion, occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realization and experience. The first three are approaches; the last is the decisive avenue of entry. All these four powers have worked by a simultaneous action more or less connected with one another.

Sri Aurobindo follows the Vedic principles in the composition of his mantric poetry. It is through the association of *Sabda* and *Artha*, the total essence of the speech takes place. But this relationship between signifier (word) and the signified (meaning) alone does not constitute poetry. It is the suggestive meaning that emanates from the association of *sabda* and *artha* form the real essence of poetry. Sri Aurobindo has the intention to work out the theme of liberation in his philosophical revelations. The poems in *Urvasie*, *Love and Death*, *Savitri* and other poems deal with the philosophical perspectives of Sri Aurobindo. The symbol in the I canto of *Savitri* shows Satyavan's treatment with death. Savitri has been shown in this episode as an epitome of the

highest will power which even challenges the powers of the dark forces (death).

As a wife of Satyavan, Savitri faces Yama. By going within herself and recollected power of her sadhana, she challenges the power of Yama. She neither indulges in self pity nor cries when the crisis is upon her. She does not cry even when her heart was being sawed into two. It was Savitri's divine solitariness and strength, her propensity to incarnate in herself the will to triumph in a world surrendered to resignation and defeat and her consciousness of mission and might to rectify the very engines of our incapacity and anguish. It was this radiant vision and experience of Savitri's personality and power that had attracted Sri Aurobindo towards the story and this is the very spirit which he has re-incarnated and sustained in his cosmic epic.<sup>3</sup>

The Supreme Spirit or the Brahman has been seriously described in India as *Satyam* (truth), *Jnanam* (knowledge), *Anantam* (Infinity) and that which shines in the form of joy (Anandarupam Amritam Yadvibhati). It is also described as *Shantam* (Peace) and *Shivam* (Auspicious and Good), *Adwaitam* (one without a second), *Pranchopshamarn* (one in whom the cosmos itself finds a resting place). It is characterized as *Sat*



(Being), *Chit* (consciousness), *Ananda* (pure bliss or pure joy). The Upanishads poses a question, "if the *void* (Akasha) were not full of Joy or Bliss, who could have breathed and lived."<sup>4</sup> It further asserts that it is from *Ananda*, they ultimately merge. It is in this symbolic sense that the eternal joy - "intoxicated dance of Shiva" goes on with the cycle of creation, existence and destruction.

What is important from the point of view of human evolution and endeavour is not merely intellectual knowledge and recognition and the existence of Reality but exploration of the realm of spirituality that is beyond the fringes of time and space. The spiritual world is not something external but is rather within our own consciousness. One has to seek this spiritual world in one's consciousness. Modern Psychology has been trying to probe into the mysteries of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo has practiced in his poetic world. Sri Aurobindo deals with the secular form of *dharma* in his philosophical vision of *Savitri*. One sees so many examples of religious tolerance in his poetry. The infatuation with creed and dogma and banishment of spiritual realization and God contact have affected all religion. Another of religious intolerance which Sri Aurobindo sees in his *Savitri* is the multiplicity of religious faiths and dogmas/creeds. The prophets of various religions ignore the essence of truth and lean upon only the surfacial part of it. Religion in itself has shown its power of survival and is undergoing an evolution, the final sense of which is still obscure. In this new phase of the mind that we see beginning, however crudely and

hesitating, there can be detected the possibility of a pressure towards some decisive turn and advance of the spiritual evolution in Nature. Religion is rich but with a certain obscurity in her first inferational stage had tended under the over weight of the intellect interspace; but it must follow the upward curve of the human mind and rise more fully at its summits towards its time or greatest field in the sphere of a Superrational Consciousness and Knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo establishes the secular approach of dharma in his philosophical vision of *Savitri*. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo deals with the gradual development of the evolution of human mind through the text of *Savitri*. Indeed the originality of *Savitri* so prevails as it has been regarded as the crest-jewel of Indian Poetry in English. Thus the entire philosophic contents of *Savitri* can be analysed in the three major philosophic constituents- love, beauty and delight. Sri Aurobindo makes a wonderful synthesis between the material and moral values of life in his philosophical vision of *Savitri*. The basic destiny of man can be awakened and made more powerful. In metaphysical language, it is called *Aatma* or the *Soul*.

In our body, it is symbolic of the owner of a chariot in which the driver, the bridles, the horses and the chariot represent the intellectual faculty, the mind, the organs of action (karmendriyas) and the gross body respectively. As the owner of the chariot or ratha is supreme in the chariot like wise our soul

should be supreme in all the diverse manifestations of man's activities. Such a notion is hardly visible in an extremely vast majority of men and women. The philosophy of Savitri can be re-interpreted according to the analysis of this chapter by citing the dialogic mode of Yajnavalkya when he tells his wife Maitreyi in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* :

The Atman, O, Maitreyi, ought to be meditated upon; for it is only when the self is seen, heard or reflected upon and meditated upon that all this is known.<sup>5</sup>

The next core Chapter, *Use of Myths and Symbols*, has analysed the mystic speculations of Sri Aurobindo on the basis of various myths and symbols used by him in poetic world. Myth is a multi-faceted phenomenon whose boundary cuts across diverse disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, religion, culture and literature. The researcher has dealt with the original motifs of the Greek Myths while analysing the myth of Savitri. In Greek *Muthos* and *Logos* have an antithetical relation to each other. But originally muthos and logos were indistinguishable in uses of classical mythologies. Myth in Aristotle's Poetics seems as the word of plot, narrative structure and fable. Its antonym and counter part is logos. The myth is narrative; story intuitive. Finally, the word myth denotes the mytho-poetic vision. The various primitive myths have been handed to us though not in their pristine

form. Fortunately, the modern man has an adumbration of the mythopoeic mind of the primitives. The myth-making faculty is thus present in the modern man too.

The images and symbols are suggestive for the operation of myth and legend in the poetic bulk of Sri Aurobindo. Myth as usual functions for the heigher motifs in Sri Aurobindo's poetry :

Actually, poesis is neither more nor less than making; a poet etymologically is a maker; and poetry is, quite literally, make believe. The term Fabulation which some of us have used to designate the story telling faculty, should make clearer how the function of myth-making relates to other forms of mental activity... It stands mid-way between the strictly cognitive and the obscurely intuitive .... It is out of the limbo between rational intelligence and the unconscious that fictions are generated.<sup>6</sup>

Myth, symbol, legend and history are the different modes of acquiring the rich store of knowledge. In his Preface to *Perseus the Deliverer*, Sri Aurobindo tells us that any author uses the myth/legend for justifying the spiritual principles. Thus, for Sri Aurobindo, the legend and myth seem the identical terms and are easily exchangeable. Therefore, the texts of *Savitri* and *Urvasie* are meant for the symbolization and the objectivization of human

knowledge and thoughts. *Urvasie* as a mythical character reveals the manifold aspects of life such as the challenge of fate and the existence of man on earth. As a first experiment of the poet in the epic form, this poem solves the purpose of the poet. Sri Aurobindo has worked on the encyclopaedic knowledge so far as the aspects of mythical characters in *Urvasie* are concerned. The dear companions of *Urvasie* such as Meneca, Mullica, Rambha, Nelabha, Sheela, Nolinie, Lolita, Lavonya and Tilottama have been brought in the text of the first to deepen the effect of the myth of *Urvasie* on the reader.

*Urvasie* anticipates *Savitri* in many ways and more especially for showing the effects and the efficacy of the myth. The mighty mother in *Urvasie* becomes suggestive of the universal mother in *Savitri*. Thus *Urvasie* becomes a prelude and an introduction to the text of *Savitri*. Both *Urvasie* and *Savitri* have been composed on the epical pattern. It has been proved in this core chapter that Sri Aurobindo before writing *Savitri* thought of making *Urvasie* an epic for human aspiration and for his evolutionary philosophy of life.

*Savitri* as the mythic world from Indian culture presents the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The myth of *Savitri* has been derived from the tale of the *Mahabharata*. This legend in the form of a myth serves the purpose of transpersonalization and the universalization of human emotions.

The very name of Savitri comes from the Vedic origin which means "to give birth to" symbolically as is the case with Sri Aurobindo's vision, Savitri stands for the creative process of life. She thus becomes the mysterious power of the word of mantra. Thus, the epic Savitri denotes an example of mantric poetry. Savitri stands for the dynamic or Shakti; she stands for the great creative and the preservative power of the sun god. This dynamic power is known in the *Vedas* as Gayatri : The form of Gayatri in the *Vedas* is the form of knowledge.

The character of Savitri makes Sri Aurobindo profess his Yogic process. His Yoga is based on the simple theory of the evolution of consciousness in being for the process of the becoming. In the age of Veda the spiritual achievement or the occult knowledge was confined to a few; It was not spread in the whole mass of humanity. The mass of humanity evolves slowly from the material and the vital man to the mental man. The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of intellect and philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it an end. Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga process which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realization. Sri Aurobindo's observation on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* shows his scholarship and his spiritual interest too. As a literary critic his tendency is highly constructive. Not that he could not

wield a devastating pen. He did it on certain occasion. His essays on *Future Poetry* are monuments of his global sweep, sympathetic understanding of the poetry of other countries cast in different languages.

Sri Aurobindo has used many symbols such as "Dawn", "Fire", "Bird", "The Sea", "The River" and "Colour", just to deepen the philosophical moorings of his poetry. The symbol "dawn" suggests the re-awakening of man and saves him from the layers of ignorance. It signifies the importance of human intellect for greater dawn by which a man can remove the lying dress and dirt that is being cemented in side of the human mind. In *Urvasie*, king Pururavas sees the quite maiden when he comes back from heaven after the war. His gaze becomes symbol which has been described by the poet the birth of a day. Thus, the concept of "dawn" as symbolic expressiveness does not show any sign for the act of sensuousness, but it becomes immediately an ascension of the higher spiritual motifs of human life. Once again, the symbol of "dawn", in *Savitri* reaches to its height and even the text of this begins with "The Symbol of Dawn".

The "fire" is another symbol that recurs consistently in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. *Fire* or *Agni* has been described as the force of Rudra and it becomes a force that brings the purification of human intentions and the truth of human consciousness and the divine energy at the instance of the Vedic

symbols. Agni or fire has been described as the most important symbol that expresses the universal truth of the Vedas.

The chapter under discussion thus brings the fact into being that Sri Aurobindo uses freely the myth and symbol for transpersonalization of human emotions. Sri Aurobindo draws his symbols and myths mostly from the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the *Upanishads*.

The next chapter, *Spirituality as the Leitmotif* (*His Overhead Poetry*) is core chapter which analyses in the text of the thesis about the subtle sign and signifiers of Sri Aurobindo as a poet. Sri Aurobindo creates the cosmic view through his cosmic epic *Savitri* :

Aurobindo created what is probably the greatest epic in English and the language of the modern period. It is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed ..... *Savitri* is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the absolute.<sup>7</sup>

*Savitri* thus represents the cosmic view of the spiritual norms. One finds in it both the temporal and the timeless. It can be justifiably placed in the category of the *Vedas* in respect of its spiritual vision of cosmic appeal. At the same time, it becomes a



unique example of the future of poetic creation in the sense that future poetry will seek to reveal the universal truth which lies behind the apparent differences of artificial barriers of Cast or Countries.

Now there is a question as to why Sri Aurobindo made his epic 35 times as long as the story being told in the *Mahabharata*. The reason why Sri Aurobindo needs such a vast canvas is that he has gone far beyond the moral, ethical or religious considerations. He has transformed the simple legend into a symbol of cosmic significance. Before coming to the composition of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has become a Siddha - the one who has realized the power of God. He has become a fully evolved soul. He had sighted the mind, that is the Truth-Consciousness. According to his spiritual vision, man is to be transformed because he will no longer be acting in ignorance but in knowledge and therefore in light, in love, in harmony and in Ananda (bliss). Sri Aurobindo sees the possibilities of the Supermind purifying and divinising the whole content of man, his material, vital and mental being. And his mental beings are Satyavan and Savitri. He has clarified before the composition of this epic that the legend of Savitri is one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance. Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the Supreme Truth

who comes down and is born to save. Aswapathy is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes.

It is obvious to Sri Aurobindo that the next stage in human evolution was to be reached not necessarily by mutation, or miracle. It is a process of evolution. Thus man would participate in the evolutionary process that is going on here and now. This almost superhuman effort to usher in the era of superman on earth, primarily took the form of an intensely searching probe into the higher regions and the upper reaches of consciousness. This is a part of the attempt to bring the power of the Supermind to bear on the matter, life and mind of humanity. It is an intense search for a more complete experience which would help, synthesize, unite and harmonize the dyad of the reality, namely Spirit and Matter, Purusha and Prakriti, Being and Becoming through the agency of Supermind. His great epic *Savitri* leads one to understand the highest norms of spirituality.

Sri Aurobindo in his spiritual explorations finds that any complicated issue of life can be solved through tracing the iconic and inner motifs of *Sadhana*. There is a distinction between atom and atma. The atom denotes the one side of life while the atmic power is manifold in its nature. The humanity en masse has to aspire not the engrossment of the matter but the height of spiritual norms through yogic performance. To Sri Aurobindo, human life is

an evolutionary process - a process which transforms man gradually from lower nature to higher consciousness. Therefore, man must evolve beyond mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence, a Supermental or truthfulness; and he should be competent to attain the perfection of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo talks of the Supreme Brahman or the position of Ananda in the highest form of poetry. The *Sahrdaya* relishes the poetry from the detached angle and with the necessary aesthetic or psychic distance. And these ideas fall under the concept of objectivization/universalization of human ideas. This is the ideology that Sri Aurobindo makes an application to his poetic creation.

The next core chapter of the work is "*His Poetic Craft*" which undoubtedly brings into being the spiritual norms, the use of myths and symbols, Vedic tradition and allusions and the Yogic experience of the poet. Since Sri Aurobindo stresses repeatedly the Spiritual, Yogic and the Intellectual soul-vision in his poetry, there appears to modern critic the sense of repetition in his poetry. The researcher quotes the letters and other texts of Sri Aurobindo in order to justify his poetic range and the aspects of his poetic craft. Sri Aurobindo himself negates the point that the art of poetry is not meant only for low mimetic objects of life. For justifying the process of repetition he strongly condemns the low memetic zone of the poetical world:

But all Poetry is not of this kind; its rule does not apply to poets like Homer or Valmiki or other early writers. The Veda might almost be described as a mass of repetitions, so might the work of Vaishnava poets and the poetic literature of devotion generally in India. Arnold has noted this distinction when speaking of Homer; he mentioned especially that there is nothing objectionable in the close repetition of the same word in the Homeric way of writing. In many things, Homer seems to make a point of repeating himself.<sup>8</sup>

This then becomes crystal clear that the repetition in the poetic craft of Sri Aurobindo denotes the higher form of art and that the repeated word communicates the meaning suggestively according to its contextual usage.

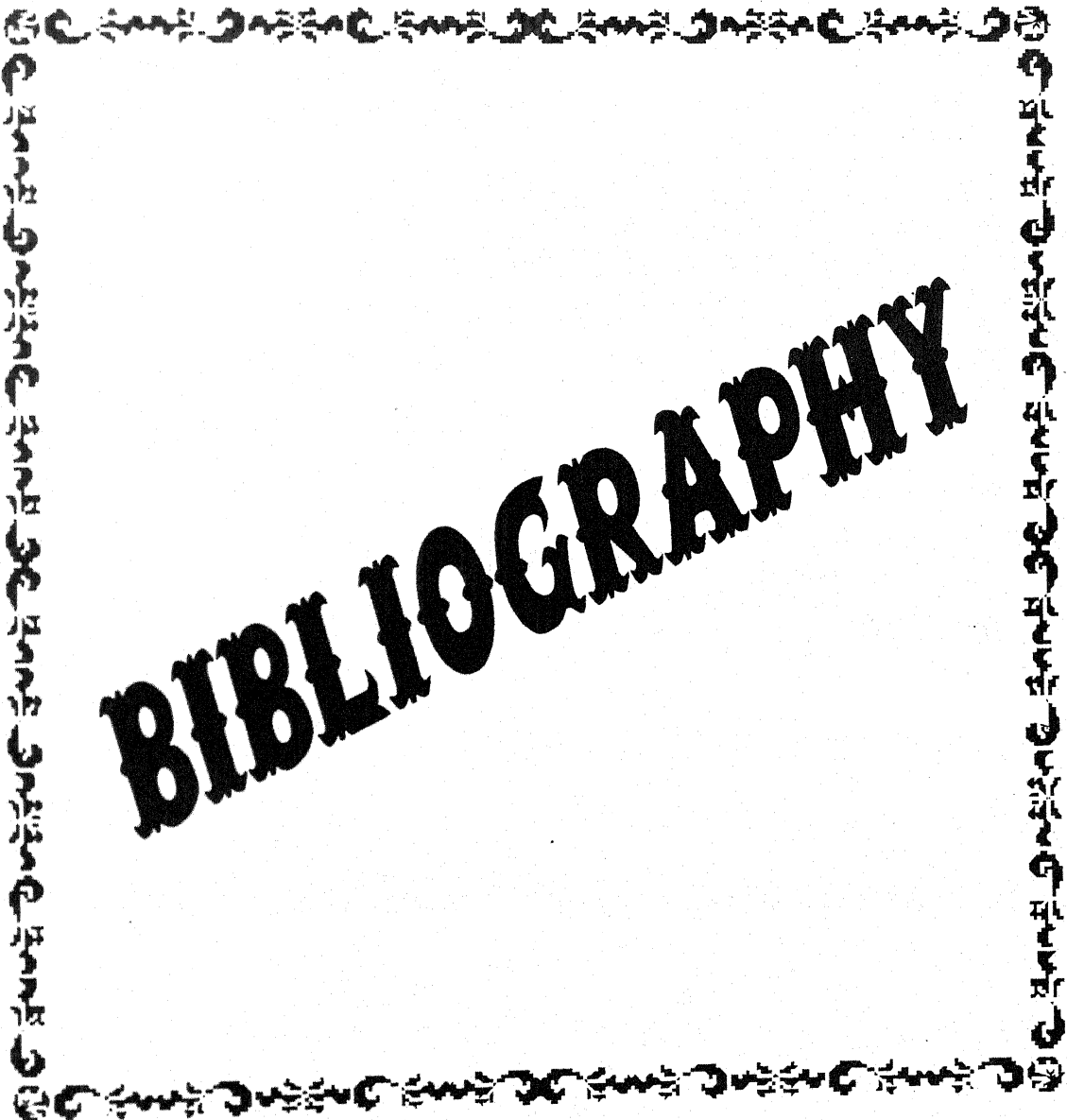
The contribution of Sri Aurobindo is certainly unique and based on the principles of art. He has written the mantric poetry what one finds in the composition of the *Rama Charit Manas* by Goswami Tulsidasa. The Mantric poetry brings into being the three highest forms of the poetic speech; the intensity of the rhythmic movement; the highest intensity of the verbal form and the substance of thought. The concept of style in Sri Aurobindo becomes a "living organism", and it grows organically. Sri Aurobindo as a poet sees beyond the low-mimetic zone of the

matter and reveals the spiritual paradigm of life.

The overall assessment of the analysis of the core chapters of this thesis reveals the fact that Sri Aurobindo reveals the quintessential essence of his mystic and spiritual experiences. His Yogic experience made him convert his poetic vision into the range of mantras. He has advocated that the mantric poetry fulfils the higher norms of life. His poetry throbs with an upsurge of the whole consciousness, and therefore the comprehensiveness of his poetry can be had only through the proper understanding of his poetic vision. However, Sri Aurobindo leaves an indelible impression to the responsive reader that there should be a proper balance between our thought and action and this process will make our life heavenly.

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